2026

ALL ABOUT HISTORY™ ANNUAL

The events, people & civilisations that changed the world

HEN
POLICE DEPARTMENT
ROCHESTER, N.Y.
59640

Digital Edition

FUTURE
VOLUME 12

IT'S V-E DAY!
German Units Yiel
Remember Pearl Harbor!
EXTRA
U.S. NAVY

ALL ABOUT HISTORY ANNUAL

It's been another incredible year on All About History. We've delved into some of the biggest stories of the past, marked some monumental anniversaries and revealed even more fascinating lost and understudied history's. And for this year's annual you get to read some of the best examples of that writing, once again.

You can look forward to reading the truth behind the legend of Lady Godiva, learning why historian Dan Jones thanks Henry V was the perfect medieval king and discovering the stories behind some of the most famous mugshots in history. And, of course, we have some of our biggest features here too, such as an in-depth examination of the pyramids of Egypt, how the Tudor family emerged from the Wars of the Roses to rule England and marking 80 years since peace in Europe was achieved. We hope you enjoy it all.

CONTENTS

ANCIENT WORLD

008 Secrets of the Pyramids
From sacred rituals to hidden treasure, find out why these world wonders were built

018 "Io Saturnalia!"
Uncover the traditions and customs of Rome's famous winter celebration

024 Making a Monster
Natalie Lawrence explains what we can learn from the beasts of ancient tales

ROYAL HISTORY

030 Rise of the Tudors
How an upstart noble family emerged from the Wars of the Roses to rule England

040 British Royal Bastards
The trials and tribulations of being an illegitimate child of a monarch

046 "Henry V was the perfect Medieval king"
Dan Jones makes the case for why the victor at Agincourt was the model of kingship

LIFE IN WAR

054 Voices of VE Day
Celebrating the end of WWII with the people who witnessed it

064 Rebuilding Hiroshima
How the Japanese city arose from the ashes of an atomic bomb

070 Devils in the dark
German bombs weren't the only things to fear in blackout London

CRIME & PUNISHMENT

078 Victorian Underworld
Discover the gangs that lurked down the dark alleys of 19th century Britain

088 America's Original Gangster
How Jesse James made himself into an icon and outlaw, but was ultimately betrayed

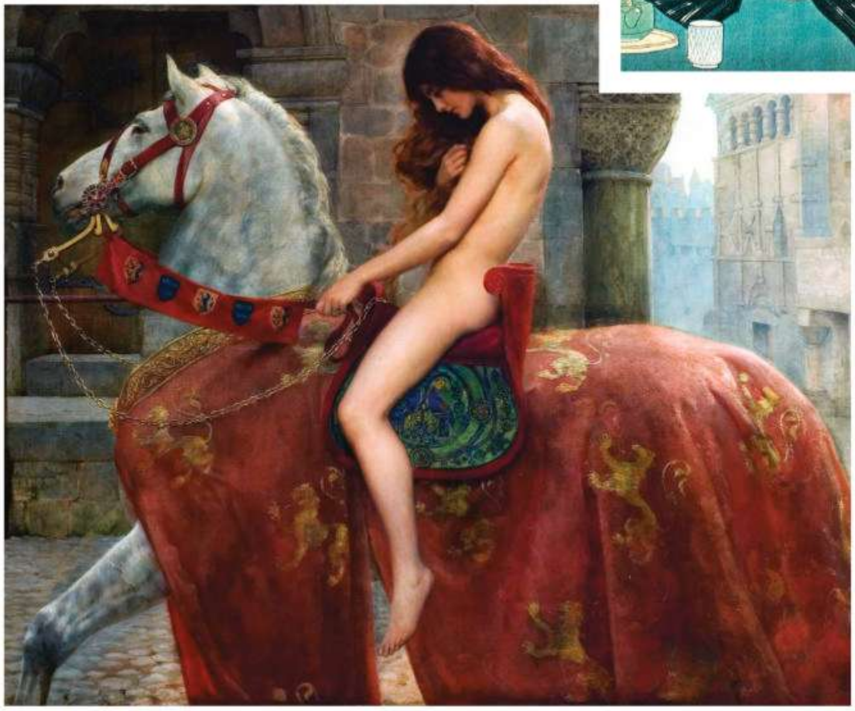
094 Stars Behind Bars
Iconic celebrity mugshots and the stories behind them

ART HISTORY

102 Shakespeare's London
From theatres wars to court politics, uncover the city life that inspired the Bard

112 James Baldwin
How this author, playwright, poet, activist and wit used his work to challenge prejudice

118 Origins of Kabuki
Explore the tumultuous history of Japan's famous theatrical artform



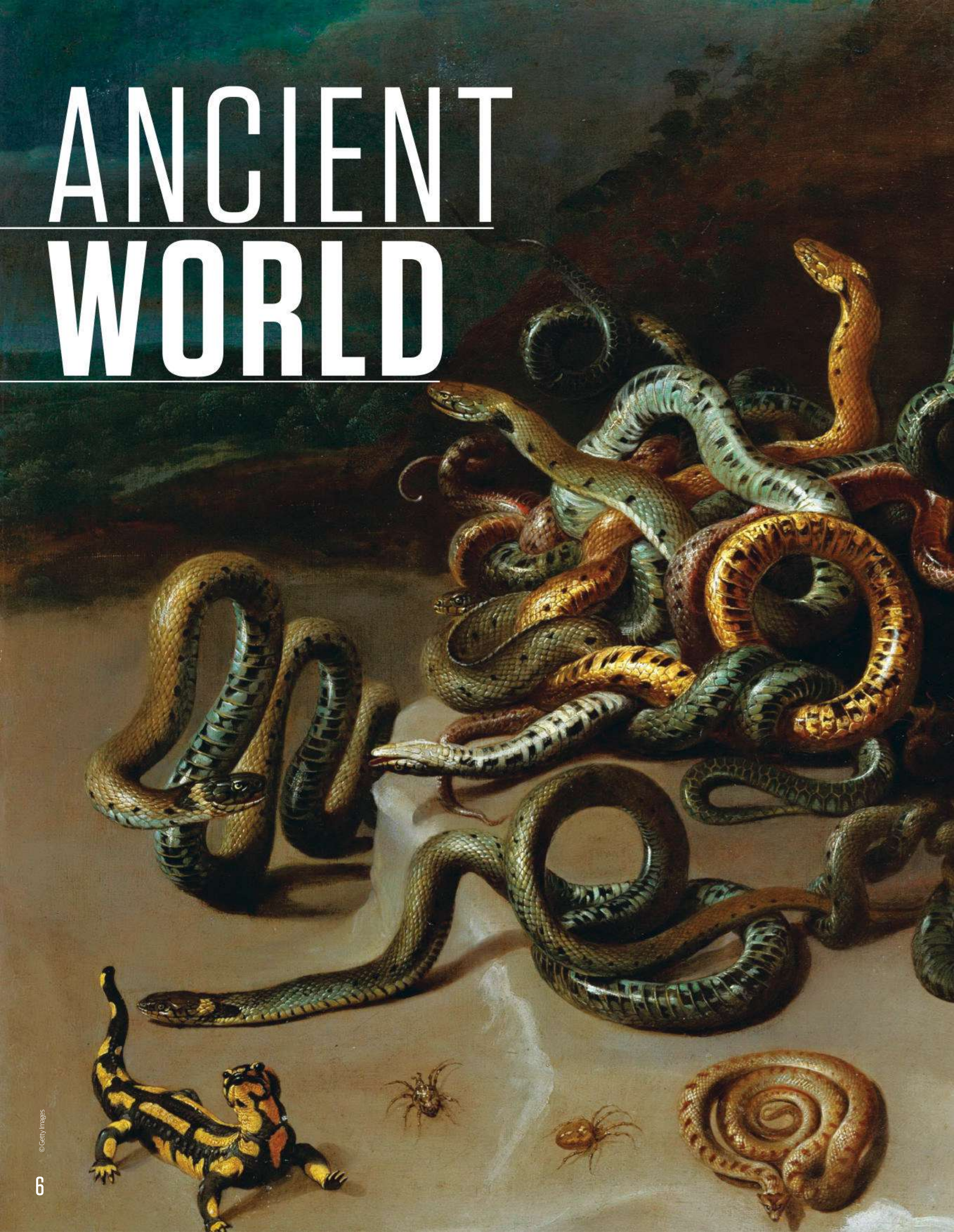
GREAT WOMEN

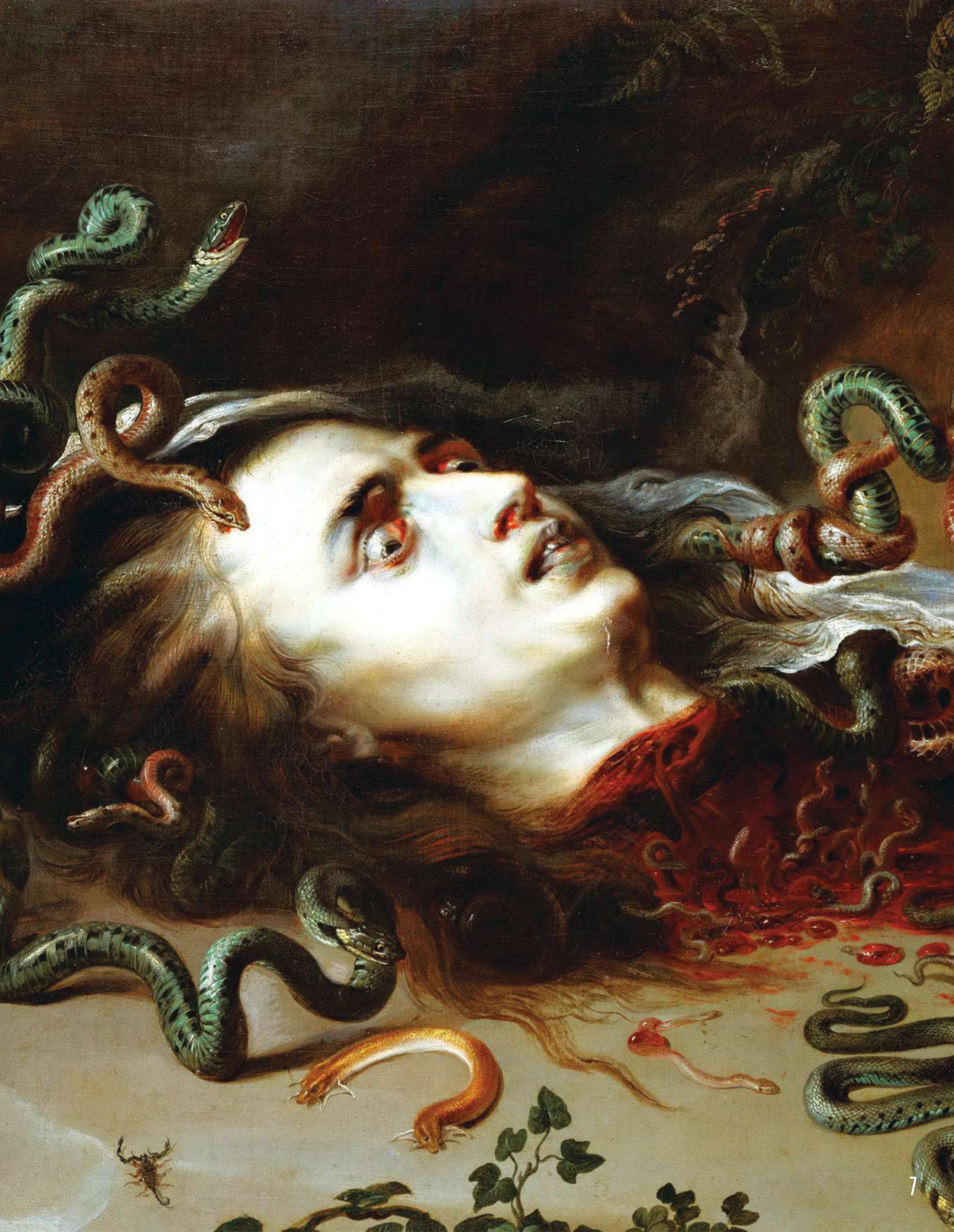
126 The Legend of Lady Godiva
How a tale of a naked noblewoman became such a famous myth

132 Hürrem Sultan
How she captured the heart of the emperor to go from slave to imperial consort

138 Pirate Princess of Halicarnassus
What's the truth about Xerxes' ally Artemisia who fought the Greeks at the Battle of Salamis

ANCIENT WORLD


© Getty Images



SECRETS PYRA

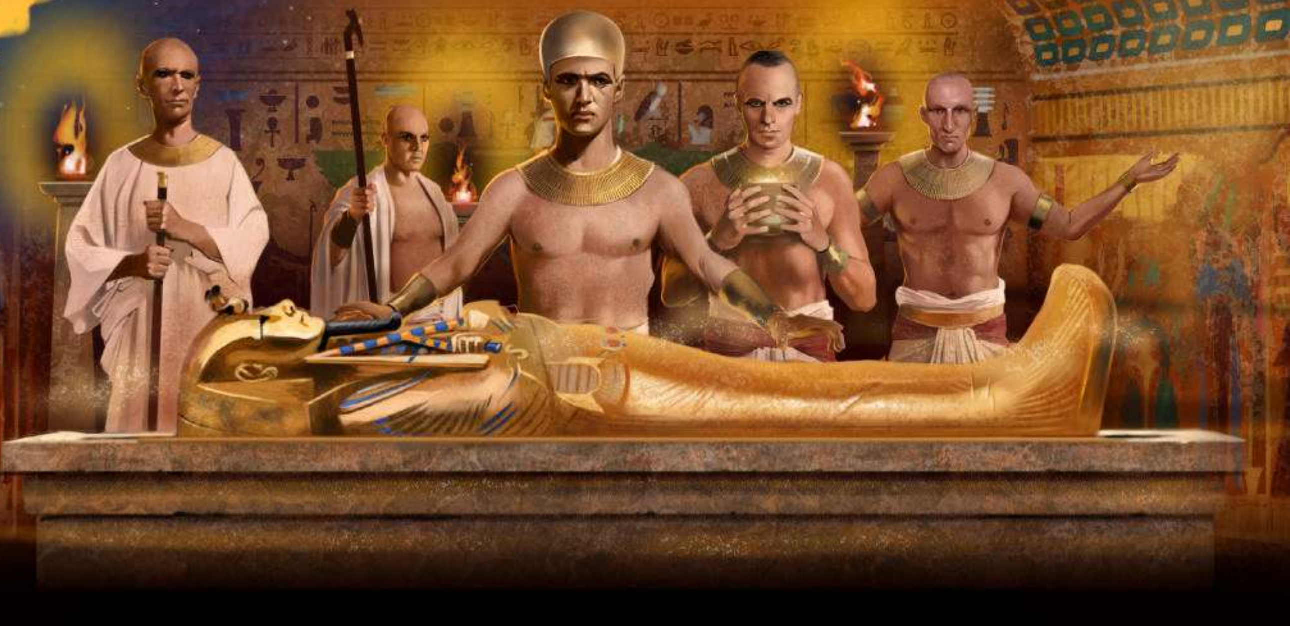
From sacred rituals to hidden treasure, uncover why these world wonders were built

Written by Ben Gazur

If you go looking for the seven wonders of the ancient world today, you are in for a disappointment. You will search in vain to find more than a few scraps of them.

The statues from the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus can be found in museums around the globe, but of the wonder itself little remains in the ground. The Hanging Gardens of Babylon have so thoroughly crumbled to dust that academics debate whether they really existed at all. The Colossus of Rhodes, a statue of the god Helios that towered over the harbour, was felled by an earthquake less than 60 years after it was erected. Time has left precious little other than their names.

Visit Giza however and the Great Pyramid of Khufu still stands. The oldest of the Seven Wonders, it is also the only one which has, largely, survived despite millennia of weathering and the despoliation of visitors. Stand before the geometrical perfection of the pyramid, built from millions of blocks of limestone, and you will be sharing the wonder experienced by everyone who has seen them for thousands of years. Pyramids have become symbolic of the public's idea of ancient Egypt, sparking many misconceptions and pseudo-archaeological theories, but their real history can tell us much about life and death for the Egyptians. ▶



OF THE MIDS

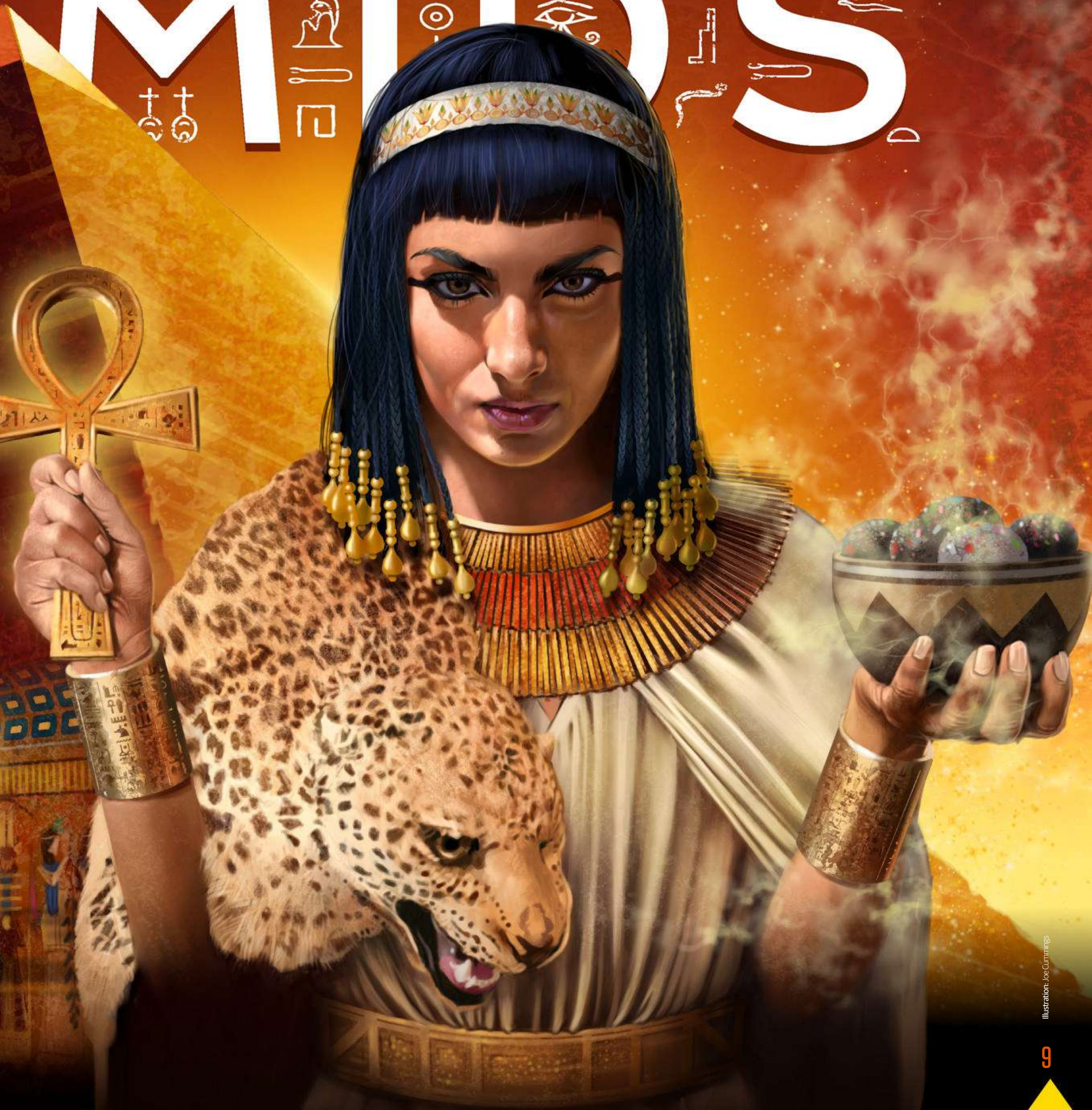
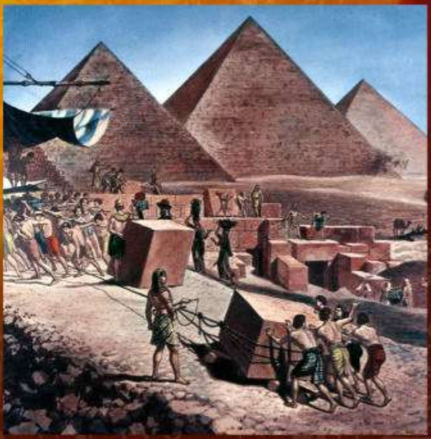


Illustration: Joe Cummings

> "PLINY THE ELDER DESCRIBED THEM AS 'IDLE AND FRIVOLOUS PIECES OF OSTENTATION'"



RIGHT How these great pyramids were built still remains a topic of debate - in this depiction, slaves use ramps to transport large stones

PURPOSE OF THE PYRAMIDS

The pyramids of Egypt were so massive and so unlike any other human constructions that for thousands of years they have attracted legends about their origins and use. The Great Pyramid of Giza was the tallest building in the world for nearly 4,000 years. When most people would only have seen buildings of one or two stories in height, it boggled the mind that such objects could have been made at all. The ancient author Diodorus Siculus commented that "they do not have the appearance of being the slow handiwork of men but look like a sudden creation, as though they had been made by some god and set down bodily in the surrounding sand."

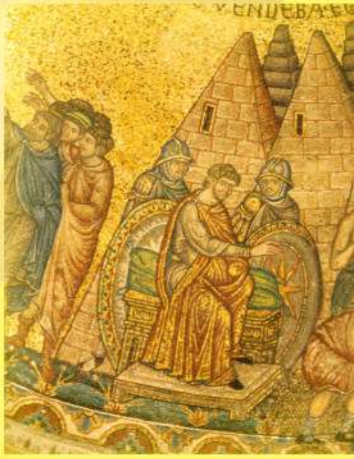
Not everyone was impressed by the pyramids. Pliny the Elder described them as "idle and frivolous pieces of ostentation" built for the pharaohs. He wrote, "Indeed, it is asserted by most persons, that the only motive for constructing them, was either a determination not to leave their treasures to their successors or to rivals that might be plotting to supplant them, or to prevent the lower classes from remaining unoccupied." Archaeological studies and a better understanding of Egyptian culture has allowed us to pierce deeper into the mysteries of the pyramids.

It is impossible to discuss ancient Egypt without talking about religion, because their whole world was tied to the divine. The pharaohs were considered to be emissaries who stood between the common run of man and the gods. So long as the Pharaoh performed the proper religious duties, then the commonwealth would be preserved - and their role did not end with their death.

For ancient Egyptians the idea of their soul surviving in the afterlife was all important, and to guarantee it many rites and rituals needed to be performed and their physical bodies preserved. Religious belief evolved over the thousands of years of Egyptian civilisation, but generally it was thought that after death two parts of the soul, known as the *ba* and *ka*, had to be reunited to form a spiritual being called an *akh* deemed worthy to live with the gods.

Mummification was just the first step on the path to immortality and a suitable resting place was needed to house it. For the pharaohs though a pyramid was not

BELOW The Step Pyramid of Djoser developed from earlier mastaba tombs and is essentially six mastabas piled on top of each other to create a pyramid



ANCIENT

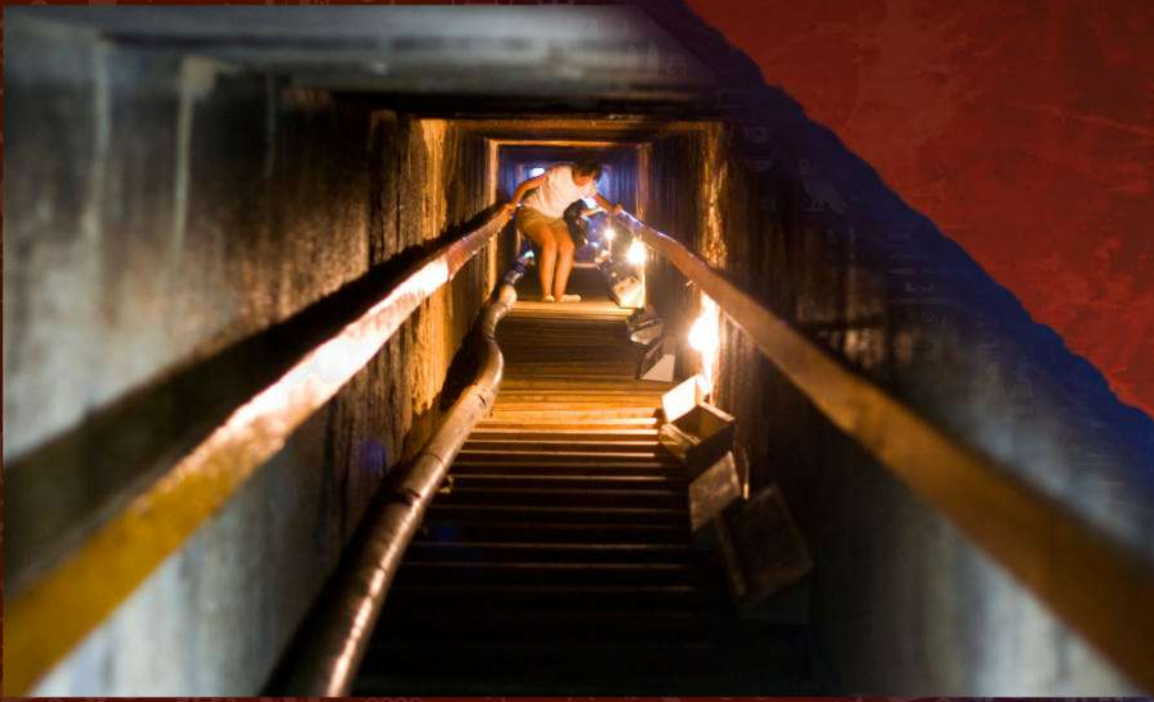
When memory of the pharaohs failed, legendary tales arose

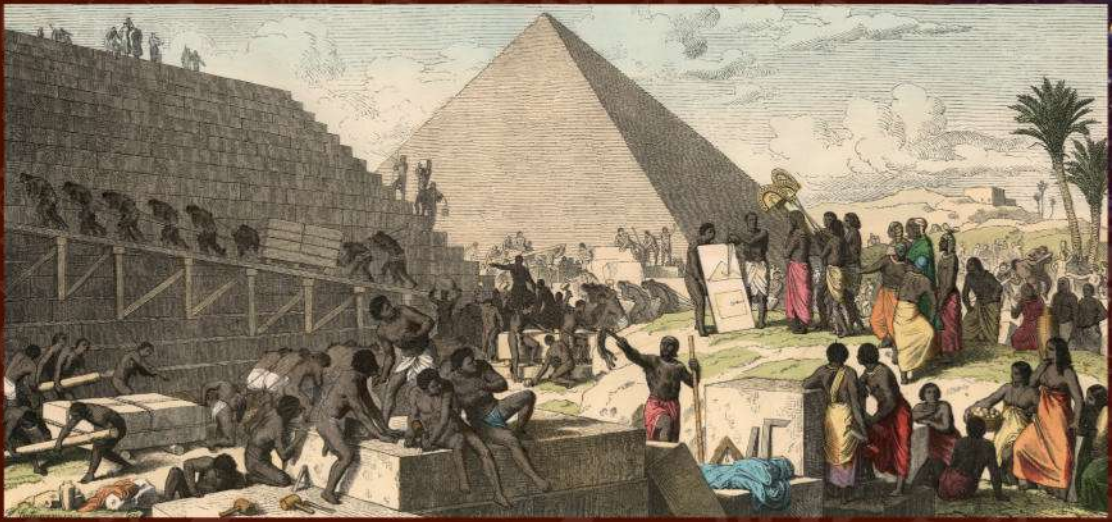
What were the pyramids for? In the ancient world most sources agree that they were the resting places of pharaohs, as do most archaeologists, but many stories and legends have attached themselves to these fascinating monuments throughout history.

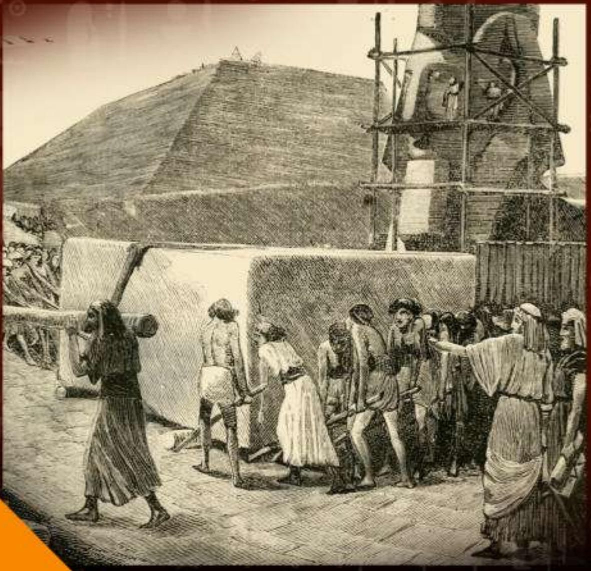
In the medieval period, an Arabic tale developed that said the pyramids of Giza had been built by a certain King Saurid before the great flood. Following a dream that seemed to prophesy the end of the world, Saurid ordered the pyramids to be constructed as both a tomb and just a tomb, it was also the centre of a mortuary complex that housed temples where priests would pray for their souls in perpetuity. Today many of these temple complexes have disappeared, which gives the appearance of pyramids standing in splendid isolation.

It is to the interior of pyramids that we must look to discover the intentions of their builders. From the pyramids of the 5th dynasty (c.2500 BCE) come a series of inscriptions known as the Pyramid Texts, which describe how the dead pharaoh should be treated and also offer instructions to the spirit of the departed on how to overcome the challenges facing Egyptians in the hereafter.

Each soul had to traverse the underworld and its many dangers before being granted everlasting life. There were a number of judgments to be passed for which one had to know the correct responses, and these were carved onto the chamber walls of some pyramids as an *aide-mémoire* for the dead. The Pyramid of Unas has texts informing the dead pharaoh how to secure the blessing of the gods. “Re and Thoth, take me with you, that I may eat of what you eat, that I may drink of what you drink, that I may live on what you live on, that I may sit on what you sit on, that I may be strong through ▶



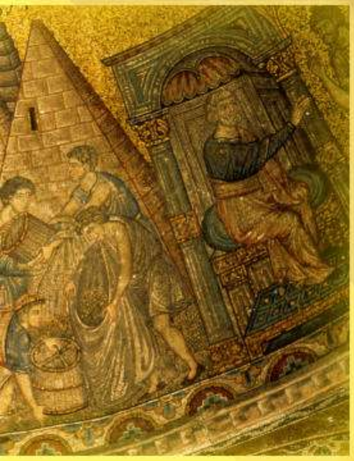




TOP Visitors can enter the Red Pyramid, believed to have been built as a burial place for Pharaoh Sneferu

ABOVE Construction of the pyramids may have required the labour and support of over 20,000 people

LEFT Mud brick and limestone were two important materials used in the building of the pyramids

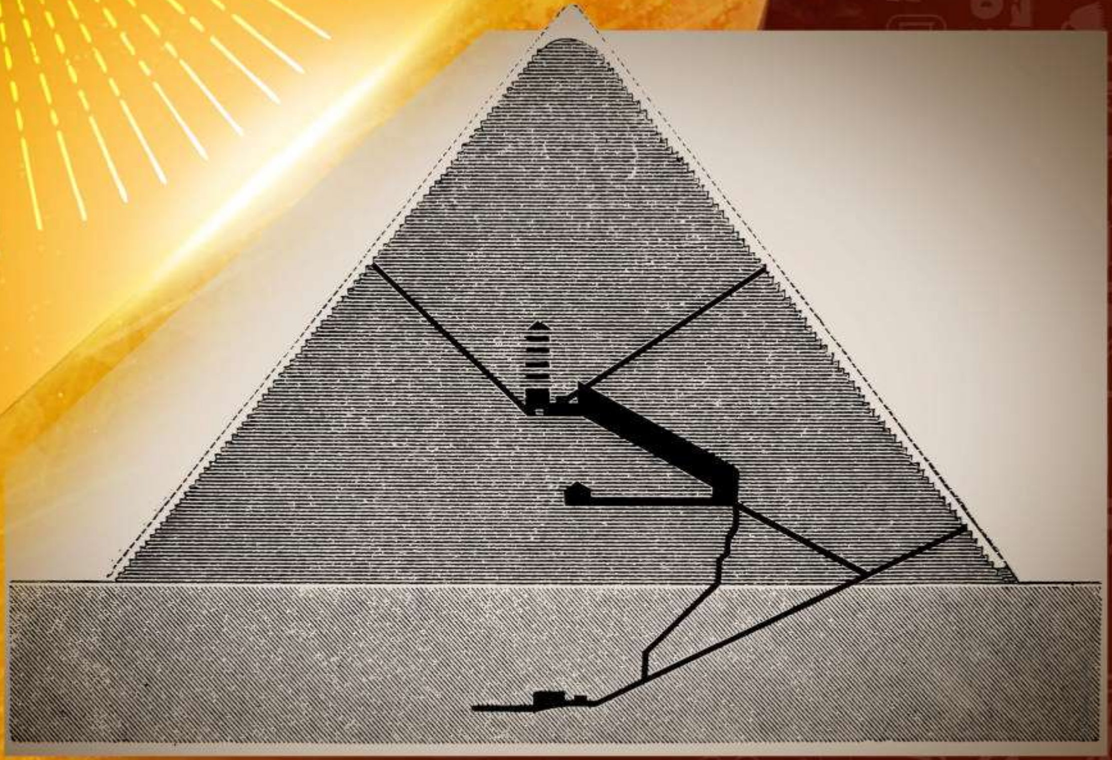


LEGENDS

a store of human knowledge. This medieval tale placed the origins of these great structures in the context of religious beliefs of the time.

Christians of the Middle Ages believed the pyramids were built by Joseph. The Book of Genesis recounts how Joseph interpreted one of Pharaoh’s dreams to mean that a long famine was coming after a period of bounty, and so created storehouses to gather supplies of grain to feed people when the time came. The pyramids, it was claimed, were these storehouses. A 13th-century mosaic in Venice shows grain being carried into the pyramids. Nor has this belief entirely died out. The Republican presidential candidate Dr Ben Carson repeated this claim in 2015.

All images: © Getty Images, © Alamy



that whereby you are strong, that I may sail in that in which you sail." The god Re was said to sail across the heavens in a solar ship known as the Boat of Millions of Years, and several full-size boats have been found buried beside pyramids, suggesting these boats were meant for the pharaoh to join the gods.

Pyramids were tombs on an incredible scale, yet do not appear to have been furnished in unimaginable splendour, as exemplified by the treasures of Tutankhamun's burial chamber. A few pieces of jewellery have been recovered from the smaller pyramids set up for queens, but nothing like the obscenely large amounts of gold most people might expect. The pyramid itself was the show of wealth meant to guarantee a prosperous afterlife rather than objects buried inside them.

But of course these fascinating pyramids did not spring from the sands of Egypt by accident – how did pyramid builders stumble their way towards these lasting monuments.

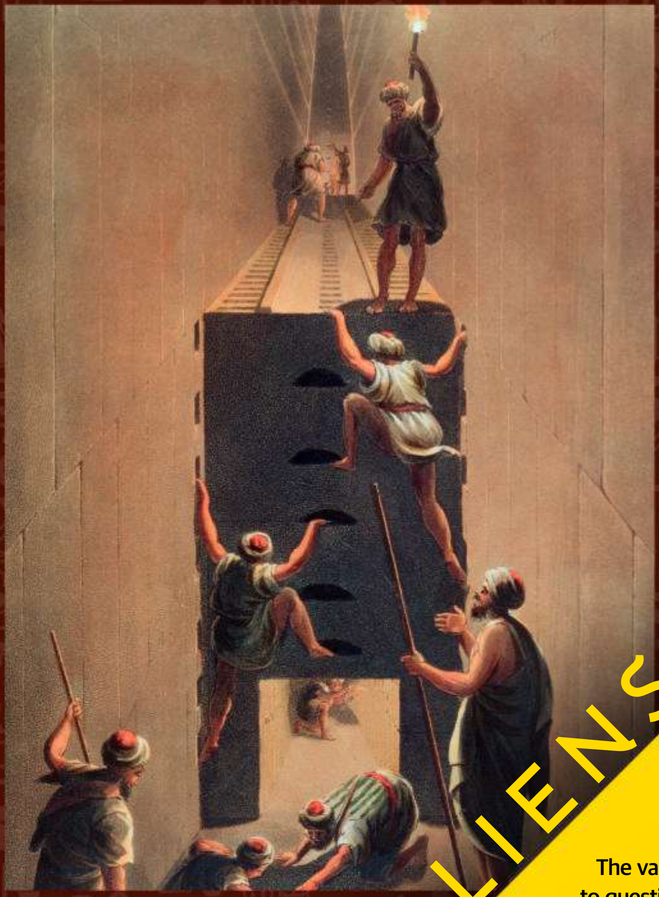
EVOLUTION OF THE PYRAMID

The 'Ancient Egyptian' civilisation is a label we use to describe a period of over 3,000 years, but by doing so we risk thinking of ancient Egypt as an unchanging society. In fact, there were many developments in how Egypt was governed, how its people worshipped, and the art created across this period. The development of pyramids, dozens of which dot the Egyptian landscape, helps us delve into the history of their builders.

Because it is the largest and most easily visited of all the Egyptian pyramids, most people focus on the Great Pyramid of Giza. This can lead to the notion that all pyramids are the same, just in different sizes. Archaeologists however have found that the path to building the Great Pyramid was littered with both failures and inspired innovations.

The oldest known pyramid looks completely different to the smooth-sided pyramids most people picture. This is because they evolved from an earlier style of grand tomb known as a *mastaba*. The mastaba was a rectangular construction with sloping walls made from stone or mud brick, often with a chapel for devotion to the dead inside the structure with a burial chamber beneath. For the pharaoh Djoser, who ruled in the 27th century BCE as the founder of the 3rd dynasty, the royal architect Imhotep is credited with creating a radical new design for a tomb.

The pyramid of Djoser at Saqqara is better known as the Step Pyramid because it is halfway between a mastaba and a true pyramid. Djoser's pyramid seems to have gone through several stages of development, resulting in what are essentially six mastabas of decreasing size stacked on top of each other to create



TOP Inside the Pyramid of Khufu – the entrance is bottom-right, with the King's Chamber in the middle

ABOVE *Passage From The Second To The Third Gallery In The Great Pyramid*, 1802

ALIENS &

Fanciful theories have emerged on the pyramids' construction

The vast scale of the Egyptian pyramids has led some to question how they could possibly have been created in the Bronze Age. The conclusions reached tend not to be looked on kindly by academic researchers.

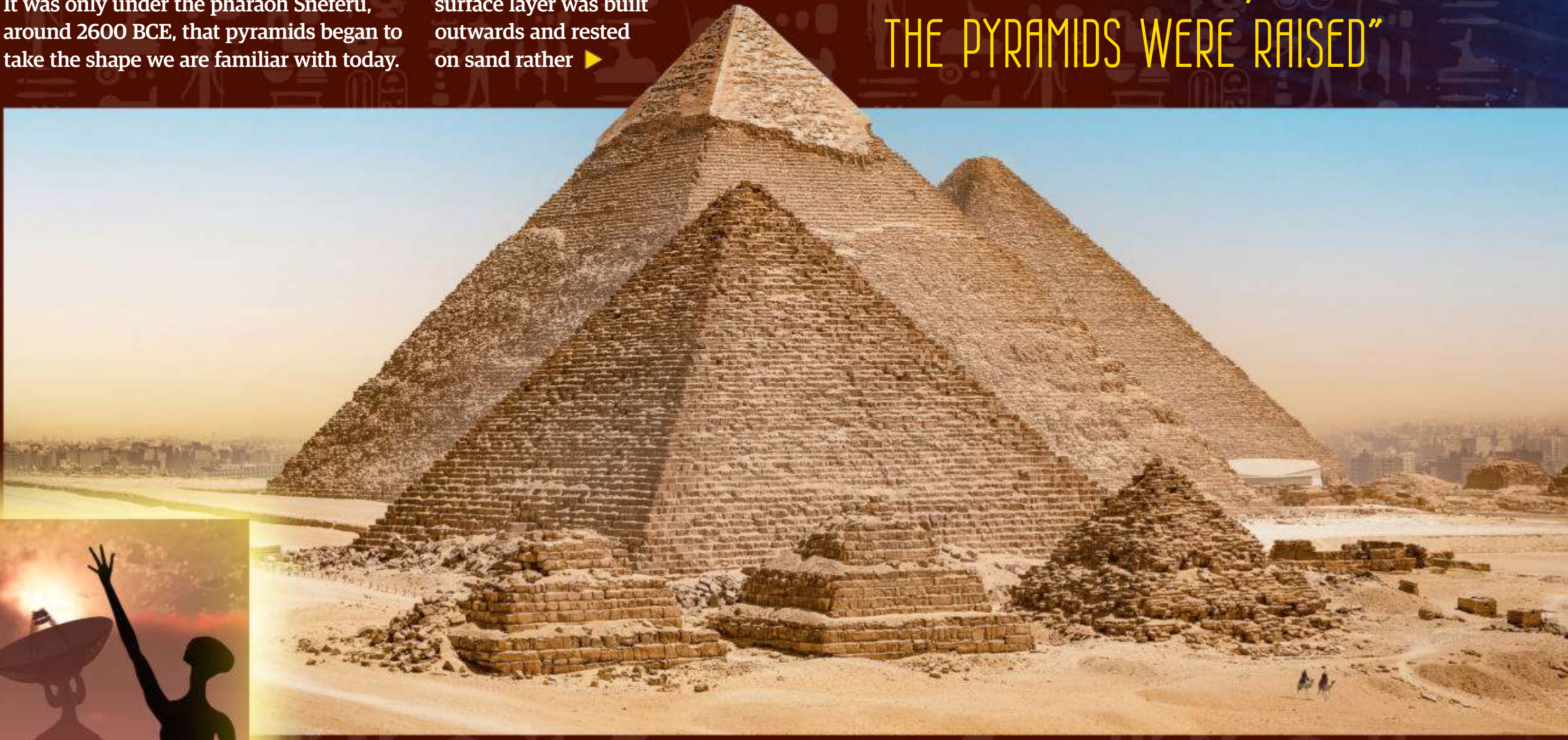
One of the most famous theories about the pyramids is that they must have been made by either a lost advanced civilisation, or by alien visitors from the stars. The fact that pyramid structures exist in many far distant places and produced by many cultures is presented as evidence that they must have all come from a single source, whether a roughly pyramidal shape. Once this form of tomb – which looms 60m into the sky and was once clad in smooth white limestone – was invented, later pharaohs required similarly impressive structures for their mortal remains.

Djoser's successor Sekhemkhet apparently decided he wanted an even taller monument, and building was started on a stepped pyramid that would have had seven steps nearby. Unfortunately for this pharaoh his brief reign did not give time for it to be completed, and the single story of the pyramid was lost until the 1950s, leading to it being known as the Buried Pyramid. It was only under the pharaoh Sneferu, around 2600 BCE, that pyramids began to take the shape we are familiar with today.

Sneferu was apparently so enamoured with the idea of being buried in a pyramid that he ordered the construction of at least three while attempting to perfect his tomb. The three pyramids of Sneferu give us the best insights into how pyramids evolved through repeated failure.

The Meidum Pyramid today looks nothing like a pyramid. It now stands like a tall tower surrounded by rubble, but it was the first straight-sided pyramid. Failure is the risk of trying something new and Meidum was a failed project. It started as a stepped pyramid but had a smooth facing added late in construction. Unfortunately, the smooth surface layer was built outwards and rested on sand rather ▶

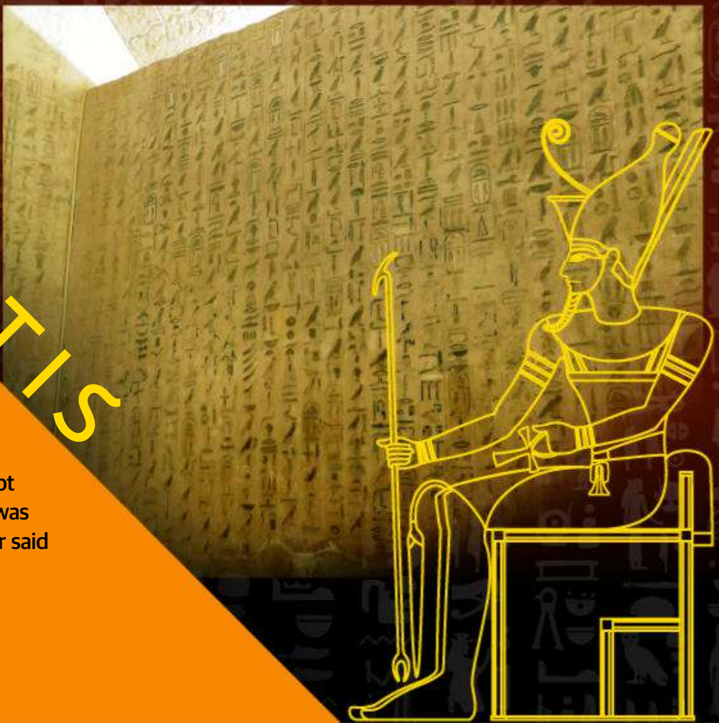
> "ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPLORATION IS REVEALING MORE ABOUT THE WORKERS, HOW THEY LIVED AND DIED, AND HOW THE PYRAMIDS WERE RAISED"



ATLANTIS

extraterrestrial or a globe-spanning Atlantean empire. It does beg the question why each culture decided to employ wildly different techniques in building pyramids when they apparently had access to unspecified advanced technology.

Other researchers have suggested that the Egyptian pyramids were never meant to be used as tombs. New Age thinkers have claimed that the pyramidal shape somehow harnesses energies. In the 20th century some claimed that food kept in a scale model of a pyramid would not rot. In the 1940s a patent was applied for on the Cheops Razor Blade Sharpener, which its inventor said harnessed pyramid power to keep razors sharper for longer.

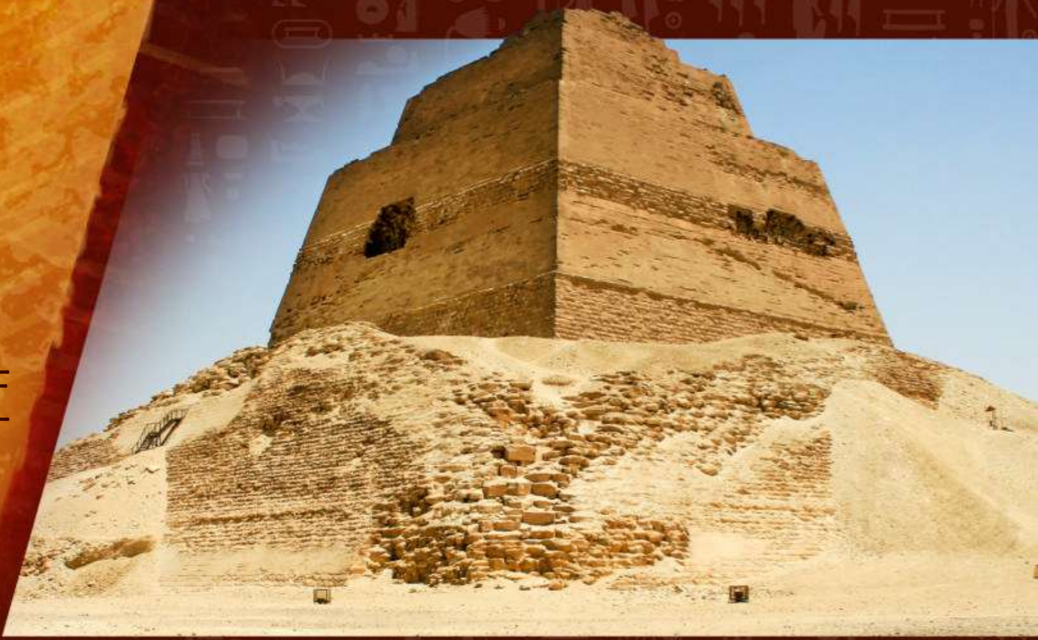


ABOVE The pyramids of Giza were recognised in ancient times as being one of the wonders of the world, and they still receive millions of visitors each year

LEFT Many early pyramids were undecorated on the inside, but after around the 24th century BCE they had engraved copies of the pyramid texts designed to aid the soul of the dead

All images: © Getty Images, © Alamy

> “THE BURIAL CHAMBERS ARE MOSTLY EMPTY TODAY, THEIR STONE SARCOPHAGI HOLDING NOTHING MORE THAN DUST”



than rock. It seems rain undermined the building and led to the outer layers catastrophically sliding off.

Sneferu's next pyramid is known as the Bent Pyramid and may have its distinctive crooked appearance because of lessons learned in building the Meidum Pyramid. The bottom half of the pyramid rises at an angle of 54 degrees but suddenly changes to a shallower angle of 43 degrees. It is thought that following the collapse of the Meidum Pyramid the builders realised that such steep sides would lead to structural weakness. The final pyramid constructed by Sneferu is the Red Pyramid, which has the 43-degree sides developed during the building of the Bent Pyramid. This is the first successful straight-sided pyramid built in Egypt and became the model for all later pyramids.

It was under Sneferu's son Khufu that the pyramids of Egypt reached their greatest heights when he ordered the construction of the Great Pyramid at Giza as his final resting place.

BUILDERS & BURIALS

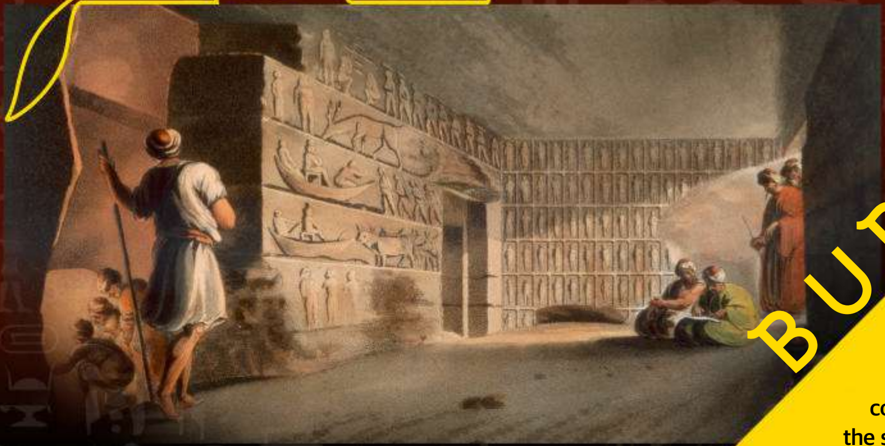
It is a mistake to examine the pyramids and think only of the royals they were intended to honour. Such colossal undertakings involved the physical labour of a great many people. The Greek writer Herodotus claimed that the road along which the blocks for the Great Pyramid were dragged took teams of 100,000 men ten years to construct. His figure may be fancifully large, as it would be impossible to have so many people working at the same time on the site of the pyramid, but no doubt thousands of workers were required at every stage of erecting the pyramids.

Ancient commentators believed that the pyramids were built with slave labour, but archaeological exploration is revealing more about the workers, how they lived and died, and how the pyramids were raised. While the pharaoh, with his god-like powers, could order his people to do anything, the workers on the pyramids were free, well-fed, and housed at government expense. Specially constructed villages where workers were housed have been excavated, along with a wealth of papyri texts and personal effects of the people who lived there.

ABOVE The Meidum Pyramid was a first attempt to create a smooth-sided pyramid, but during construction the outer layers collapsed, leaving just the core standing

BELOW LEFT An 1802 illustration by Thomas Milton depicting a subterranean chamber near the Giza pyramids

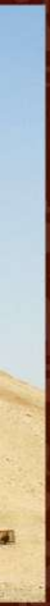
BOTTOM RIGHT Venturing inside the narrow, scarcely lit Grand Gallery inside the Pyramid of Khufu

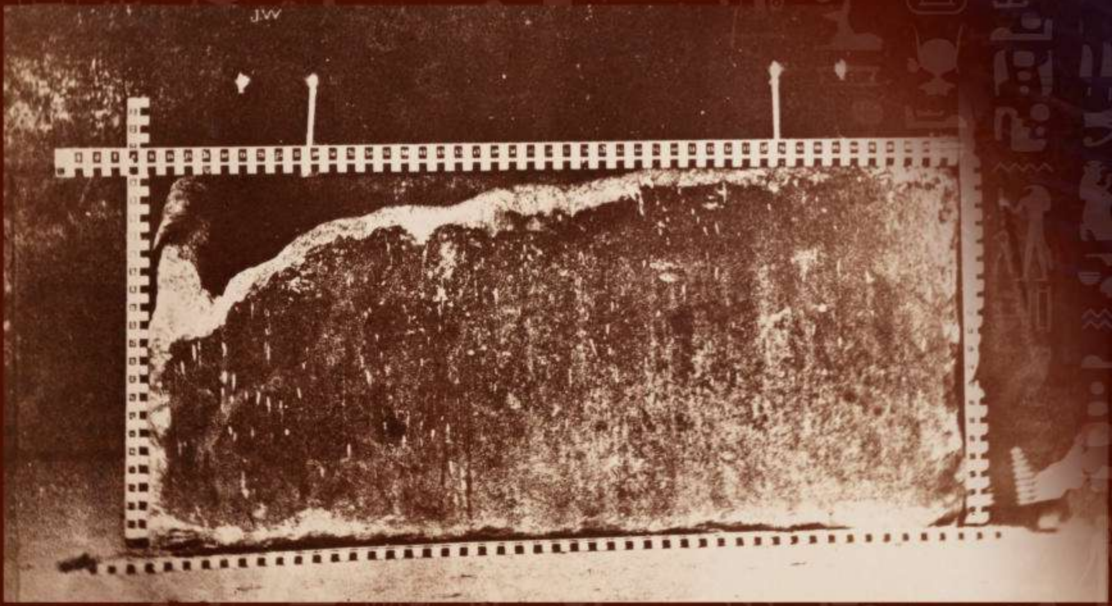


BURIED LIKE

If you have to die, why not be buried in style... inside a pyramid?

Egypt was a popular tourist destination for Romans in the late Republic and early Empire, so it is perhaps understandable that some wished to recreate some of the sites they visited. For Gaius Cestius this took the form of building a pyramid to house his tomb. Rather smaller than the Egyptian type, and with the steep side of a Nubian pyramid, it still stands in Rome today. It survived in part because when walls were constructed for the city, the pyramid of Cestius was incorporated into the structure.





LEFT The King's Chamber in the Great Pyramid once housed the remains of the pharaoh Khufu, but today his sarcophagus stands empty

BELOW LEFT The pyramids were originally clad in white limestone that was mined at special locations. This limestone has mostly been removed to be used elsewhere

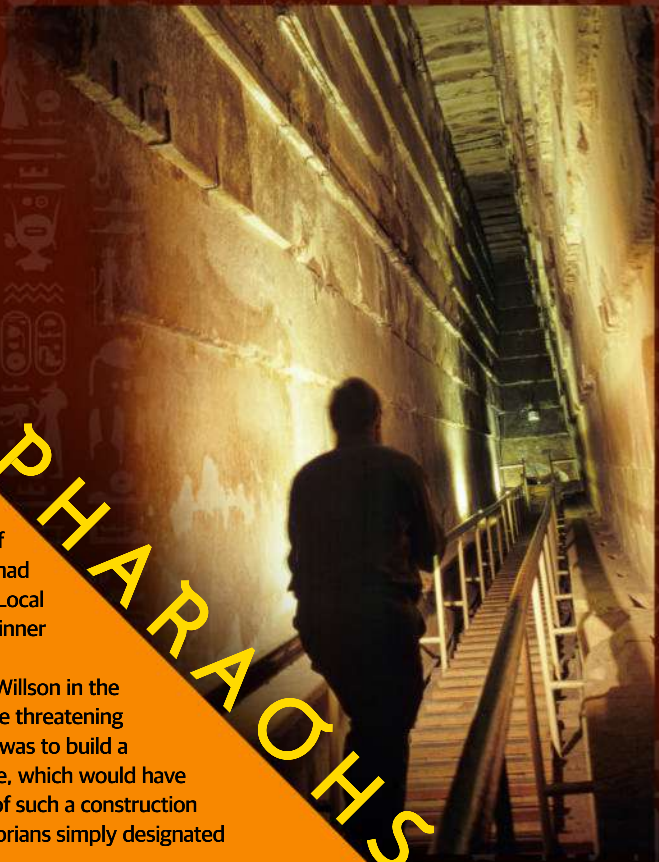
To build a pyramid you must first gather your workforce. Modern estimates for the number of people required to build the Great Pyramid differ, but there was likely a core of skilled masons and quarry workers of around 4,000. These could build a pyramid over a period of around 20 years, but these builders would require the support of about 20,000 people to haul the blocks of stone, prepare all of the equipment needed, and provide food for the workers. This was a significant number of workers when the population of Egypt was probably 2-3 million. There were also numerous administrators and architects required to keep the project on schedule.

The population of Egypt was largely agrarian in this period, but thanks to the nature of the Nile much of this population was unable to work for months at a time. The annual inundation of the Nile was necessary for farming as it spread fertile soil onto fields, but while the river was high it was impossible to work on the land. These unemployed workers could then be put to work on royal projects, such as the pyramids, as a duty owed to the pharaoh. Since the pharaoh was semi-divine, workers may also have considered working on their tombs a religious act meant to ensure the continued prosperity of Egypt.

To begin building a pyramid you must first clear the location. After the disastrous subsistence on the pyramid at Meidum, builders were careful to build directly on bedrock. This had to be mapped out and levelled. This seems to have been achieved by cutting out a grid of channels over the area and filling them with water. The rock could then be removed down to the level of the water to ensure the land was flat.

Next the central core of the pyramid had to be constructed. For the Great Pyramid of Giza the main structure is made from around 2.3 million blocks of limestone weighing several tonnes each. Once these were in place a white cladding of polished white limestone was added.

We know much about how this special white stone was mined and transported ▶



THE PHARAOHS

The British were not immune to the charms of a pyramid. The eccentric John 'Mad Jack' Fuller had a pyramid tomb constructed for himself in 1811. Local legend said that he was entombed seated at a dinner table with a final meal set in front of him.

An astonishing plan was hatched by Thomas Willson in the 1820s to find space for London's dead, who were threatening to overwhelm all available burial space. His idea was to build a pyramid, to be called the Metropolitan Sepulchre, which would have contained space for 5 million corpses. The cost of such a construction made it impossible to build and instead the Victorians simply designated new cemeteries on the outskirts of London.

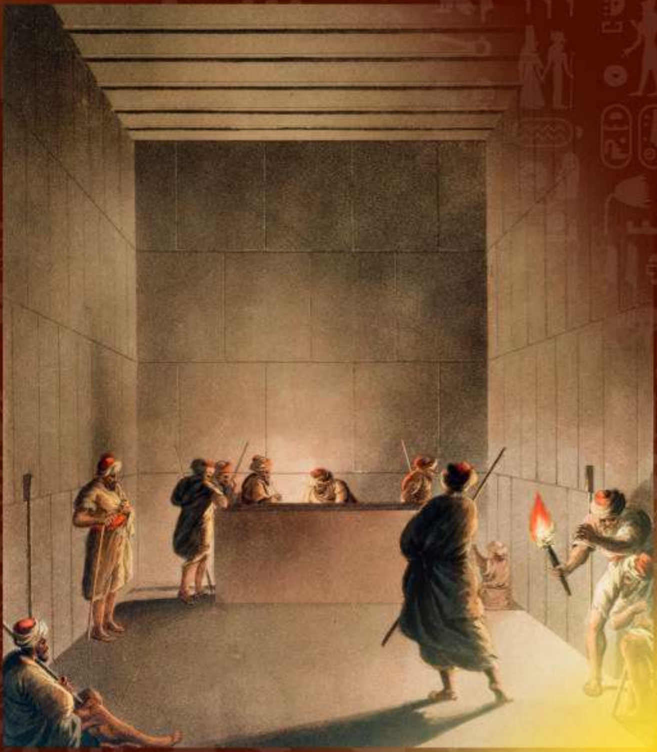
All images: © Getty Images, © Alamy

to the site of the pyramids thanks to the remarkable discovery of the oldest written papyrus. Known as the Diary of Merer, it records the schedule of a works overseer called Merer how white limestone was mined and transported by boat along the Nile to the Great Pyramid at Giza. From this discovery we know that Merer commanded a workforce of around 40 boatmen who ferried around 200 blocks per month from the mines to the pyramids. Recent research has revealed that 31 of the pyramids border on a branch of the Nile that has since dried up, suggesting the blocks were carried very close to the construction site by water.

We can also glimpse the lives of those who moved the stones for the pyramids thanks to the graffiti they left in hard-to-reach places. From this we know that the work gangs who built the pyramid gave themselves names such as "Friends of Khufu" or "Drunkards of Menkaure".

A capstone, called a pyramidion, was placed on the summit. Sometimes this stone was covered in gold, silver, or copper to make it flash with reflective sunlight. The pyramidion had special significance as it was related to the Benben stone mentioned in Egyptian religion. Accounts say that the Benben stone was the first land to rise above the primordial waters. Examples have also been found above the tombs of private individuals, suggesting everyone wanted to be associated with the Benben stone – those of the pharaohs were simply more extravagant than most.

All of this stonework, as well as the quarrying of stone blocks, was undertaken with simple tools made of stone, wood, and copper. Manpower and patience were needed to construct the pyramids, and that is about all that can be said of their building. People from antiquity were just as unsure about how they were made as researchers are today. How were the blocks of the pyramid carried to the top?



TOP Pyramids were once capped with a highly decorated stone, called a pyramidion, associated with the religiously significant Benben stone

ABOVE Venture into the centre of the Great Pyramid and you'll find Pharaoh Khufu's (empty) sarcophagus

Without cranes the pyramid builders could not have lifted stones from one layer to the next directly. Most likely, large ramps were constructed so that the blocks could be dragged on sleds, but even the form of these is debated. Was there a single long ramp projecting outwards from the pyramid, or one that clung to the side of the pyramid in a spiral? There have even been suggestions that internal ramps were built into the structure of the pyramid. The ancient writer Diodorus Siculus was told that the ramps were made of salt and once construction was complete the river was diverted to dissolve them away. Diodorus did not believe this.

However it worked, it must have been efficient. For the Great Pyramid to have been built in 20 years, a block would have to be put in place every five minutes if teams were working around the clock. Yet there is a secret to pyramid construction that makes them easier to build as they get taller, which springs from their geometrical form. Because pyramids taper towards the top, each level requires far fewer blocks than the one below it. When a pyramid has reached a third of its total height, two thirds of the total number of blocks have been laid. When it is half its total height, then almost 90% of the blocks are in place.

> "THE PYRAMIDS HAD BEEN BUILT AS THE ETERNAL RESTING PLACES OF THE PHARAOHS. IN THIS THEY FAILED"

FALL OF THE PYRAMIDS

The pyramids had been built as the eternal resting places of the pharaohs. In this they failed. The pyramids were all plundered in antiquity and all the sarcophagi that once housed the mummies of the pharaohs in them are empty. The massive structures of the pyramids presented a far too tempting target for grave robbers who were well aware of the treasures that must have rested inside.

The burial chambers within pyramids are mostly empty today, their stone sarcophagi holding nothing more than dust. What human remains have been discovered often date from much later or consist of tiny fragments of bone. Robbers knew that golden amulets lay within the wrappings of a pharaoh's mummy and tore into the bodies to retrieve them. Later monarchs chose to be buried in more discrete underground tombs to try and avoid this postmortem plundering.

While the pyramids were created as sites of sacred importance, the passing of time meant locals no longer held them in such awe. All of that gleaming white limestone proved too valuable to waste on old tombs. It was stripped off and reused in other constructions, leaving only a few scattered remnants to hint at how glorious the pyramids once looked.

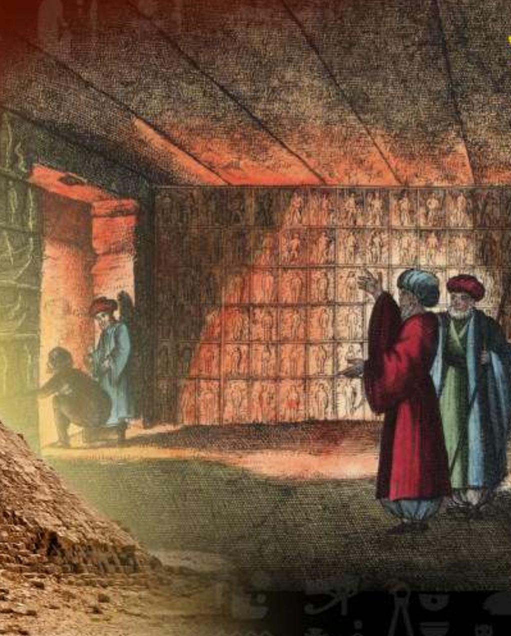
The golden age of pyramid building came to an end in the 16th century BCE. The Pyramid of Ahmose is little more than a mound of rough rocks today and shows none of the elegant design and intense labour of the Great Pyramid built nearly a thousand years earlier. Indeed it was constructed by piling up a heap of rubble and covering it with an external layer of limestone. When this was removed later to be used in other buildings, the pyramid simply fell apart. It seems that pyramids were a luxury that Egypt could no longer afford to indulge.

Even the ruins of pyramids like this can tell us much about the real history of ancient Egypt, revealing the level of manpower and resources a pharaoh could command. And the pyramids have many more secrets to uncover. In 2023 scientists used muons, particles created by cosmic rays striking the atmosphere, to discover a large chamber deep within the Great Pyramid. The pyramids may be old, but they always have something new to discover. ○

ABOVE Shawabti figurines were funerary objects placed inside Egyptian tombs

BELOW The Bent Pyramid shows two clear phases of construction. The shallower upper layers may have been designed in response to the failure of the Meidum Pyramid

BOTTOM RIGHT Hieroglyphic texts can be found inscribed on the walls of ancient Egyptian burial chambers from the time of the 5th Dynasty



All images: © Getty Images, © Alamy

"Io Saturnalia!"

What was the 'Roman Christmas'?

Written by Jonathan Gordon

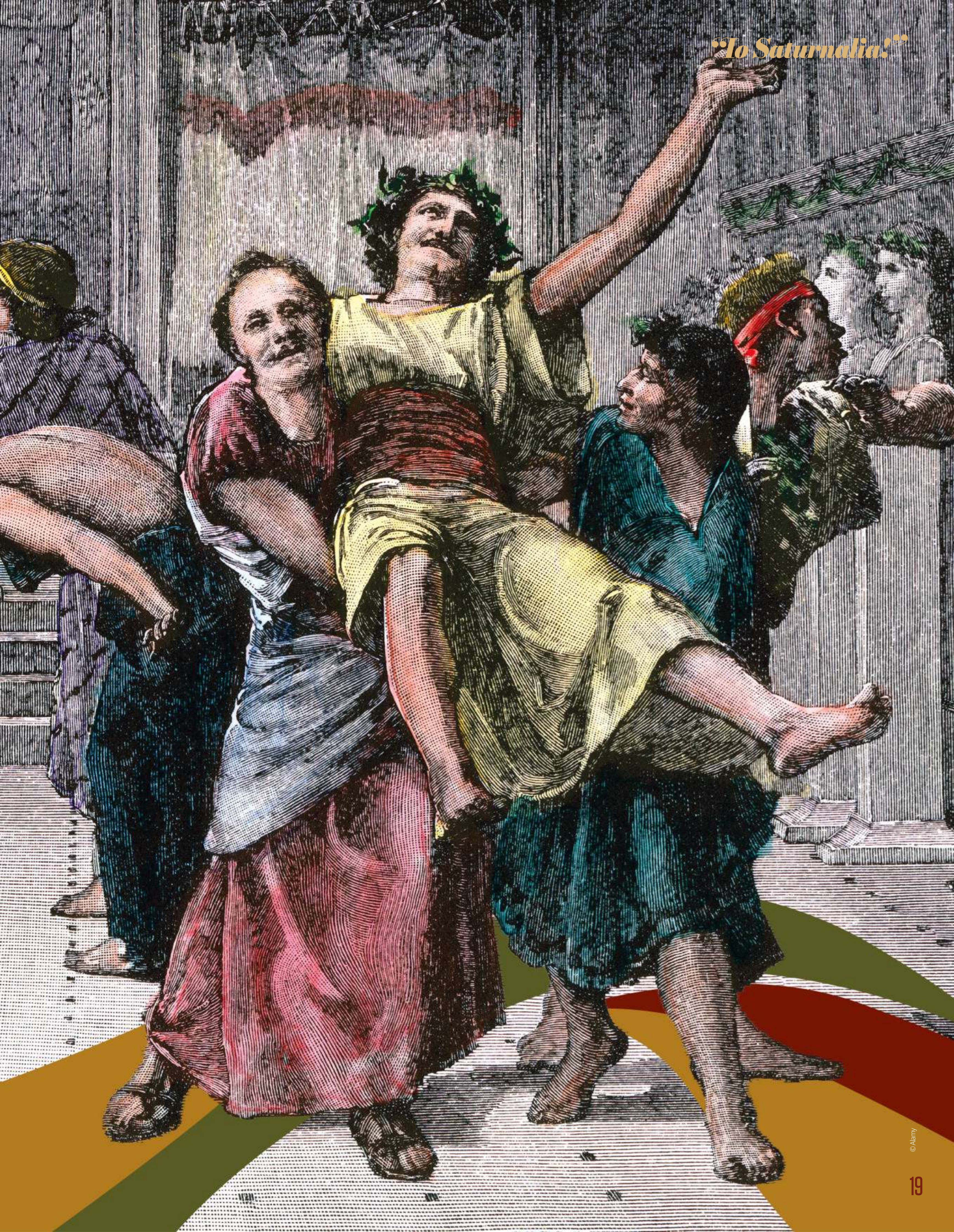
It's the dark of midwinter but all around you are bright candles – gifts have been exchanged, you're digging in to a hearty meal and you're surrounded by friends and family, many of whom might be a little the worse for drink. The mood is jolly and relaxed, no one has to work today and everyone can enjoy themselves as they see fit. Outside, you can hear people walking up the street singing songs of the season, but they aren't Christmas carols. No, this celebration is Saturnalia, the multi-day festival of the god of farming and the harvest and, as you can likely tell, a celebration that had a lot of influence on religious holidays that followed.

As the name implies, Saturnalia was a celebration of Saturn, the Roman god of farming and the harvest. It was originally honoured on 19 December each year, according to the old Roman calendar, to coincide with the end of the winter sowing season. Columella, a Roman soldier and farmer who wrote extensively about Roman agriculture, states that a farmer should be done with planting their autumn crops by the beginning of December. As such, this was a natural time to rest and relax in the lead up to the solstice, before the work of the farm would pick up once again.

At first it appears that Saturnalia lasted for a single day, but it began to be extended over several days, lasting up to a week at its peak, from 17 December to 23 December. This expansion of the festivities is believed to have taken place between 133-31 BCE in the late Republic. It was aided, in part, by the introduction of the Julian calendar by Julius Caesar, which extended December by two days and moved Saturnalia from 17 to 19 December. It would appear that

▶

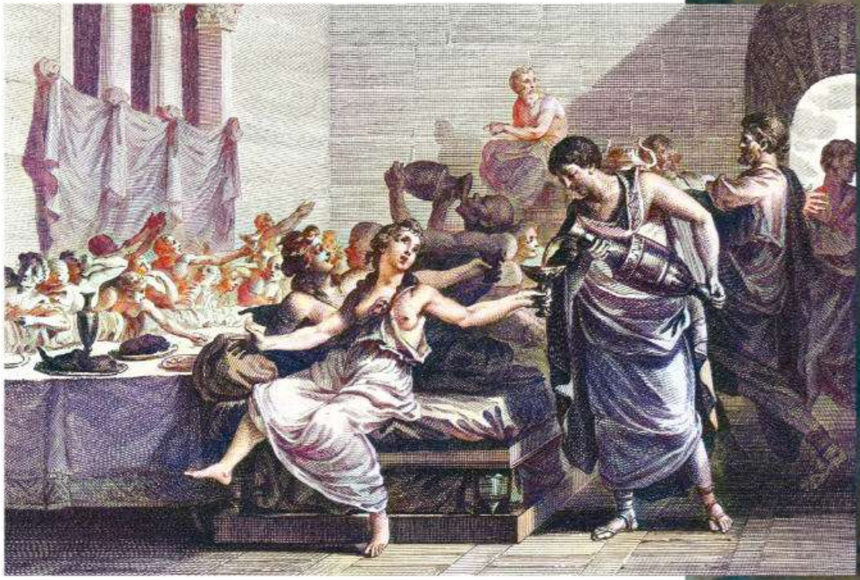
> "December was a natural time for Roman farmers to rest and relax"


"Io Saturnalia!"

© Alamy

many people continued to mark the festival on the original date, which began to stretch things out. Various attempts were made to trim down the festival, with Augustus mandating a three-day celebration and Caligula making it five days, but most seem to have eventually honoured the week-long event.

With this extended festival, each day took on its own important role, although a full accounting of Saturnalia has not been discovered and we're left to piece together fragments of the event from mentions in multiple sources stretched over time. Things would always begin with an event at the shrine to Saturn in Rome, which according to Livy dated back to about 497 BCE, although the holiday may have started many years earlier. The temple saw a number of reconstructions over the decades with the ruins that exist in Rome today, attached to the Roman Forum, dating to a reconstruction of the temple in the fourth century CE. Festivities would then be held around the city, both privately among families and households and publicly. Publius Papinus Statius describes one festival under the reign of Emperor Domitian, held in the amphitheatre in Rome. Everyone brought food and wine with pastries served in the morning and, later, female gladiators fought in the arena as entertainment.



"The enslaved of Rome could expect to be waited on by their masters"

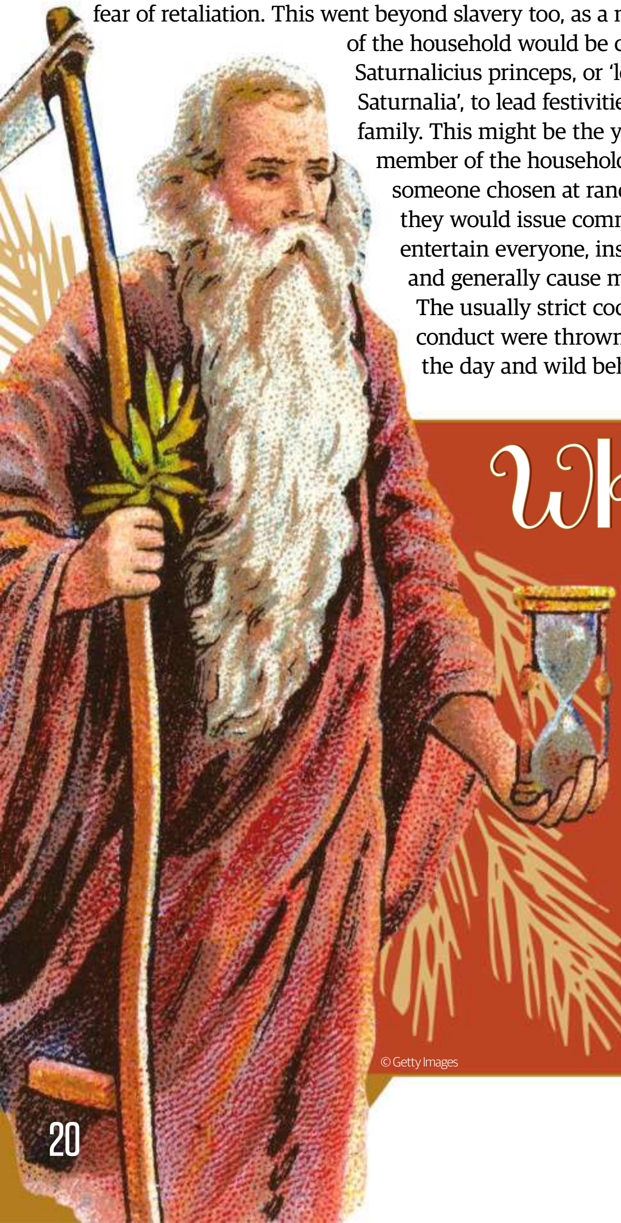
Additionally, Saturnalia was a time for upturning social norms and expressing liberty for all who lived in Rome. The enslaved could expect to be waited on by their masters and to be served a meal similar to one their masters would enjoy later in the day. It was common for enslaved workers to wear their masters' clothes for the day and express their grievances freely, without fear of retaliation. This went beyond slavery too, as a mock king of the household would be chosen, the Saturnalicius princeps, or 'leader of Saturnalia', to lead festivities in the family. This might be the youngest member of the household or someone chosen at random and they would issue commands to entertain everyone, insult guests and generally cause mischief. The usually strict codes of conduct were thrown out for the day and wild behaviour was encouraged, which is how Saturnalia built up a reputation for being a particularly drunken and unruly event.

After the initial religious ceremonies it was common for gambling, singing, music, feasting and socialising to fill the days that immediately followed. Lucian, a Roman poet, records Saturn himself declaring: "During my week the serious is barred; no business allowed. Drinking, noise and games and dice, appointing of kings and feasting of slaves, singing naked, clapping of frenzied hands, an occasional ducking of corked faces in icy water – such are the functions over which I preside." Bright colours were encouraged, replacing the more sedate togas that would normally be warn. It was a carnival atmosphere that led to the poet Catullus calling it "the best of times". All through the streets a shout of 'io Saturnalia!' (hail Saturnalia) could be heard.

The last days of the festival were the Sigillaria where presents of candles, called cerei, and wax fruit and wax or terracotta statues, also called sigillaria, would be given. Manufacturers of such gifts

ABOVE Rome typically lived by strict social codes, but these were relaxed during Saturnalia

RIGHT Saturnalia was considered a time for feasting and enjoyment for everyone as the sowing season ended



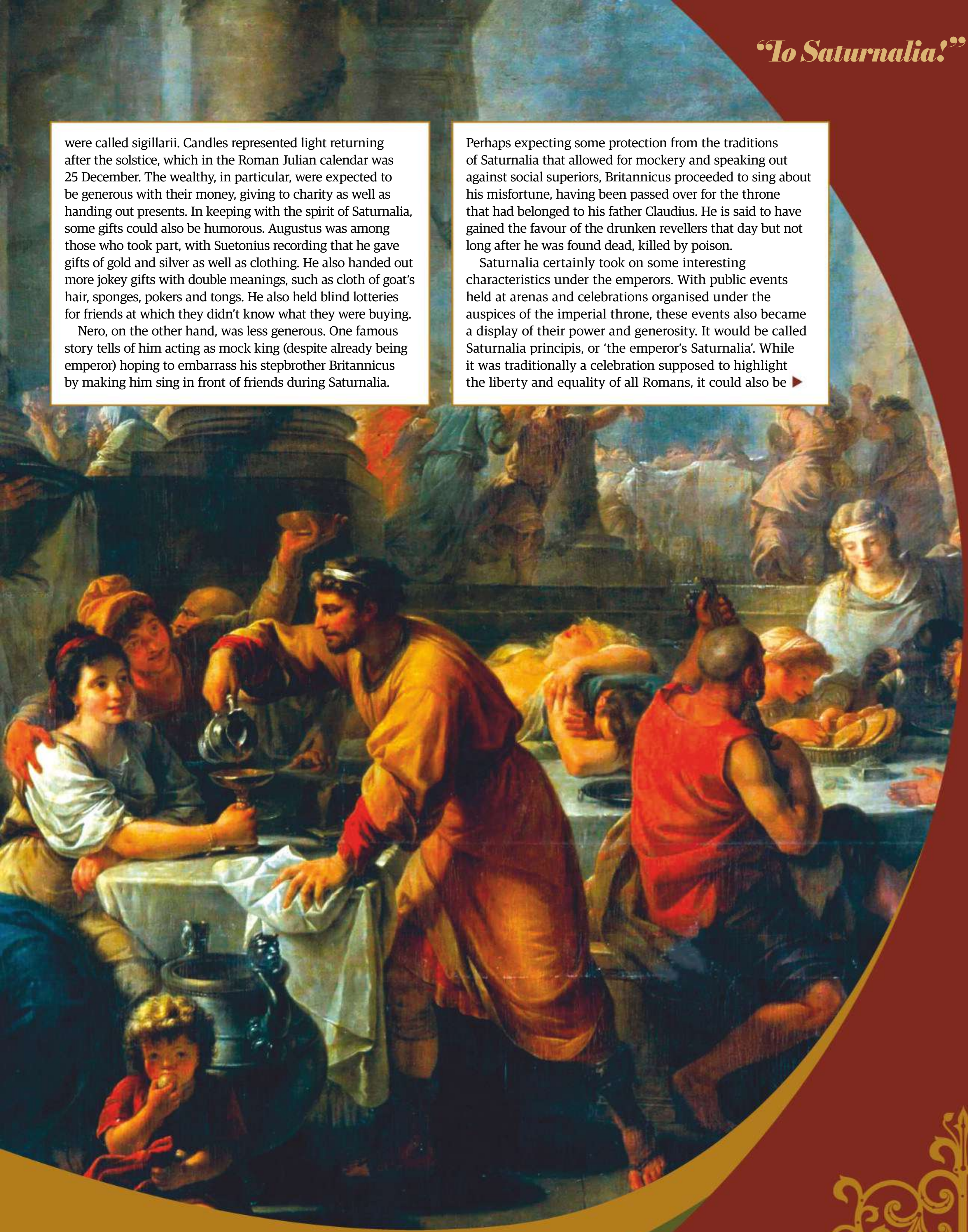
Who was Saturn?

A quick guide to the god of the harvest

Saturn was the god of sowing and by extension the god of farmers and harvests for the ancient Romans. He was connected to the Greek Titan Cronus, who had been exiled from Olympus by Zeus. In Roman mythology he went on to a more peaceful life as the ruler of Latium, the region in which Rome was established, and taught the local people to cultivate the land.

While he was overthrown by his son Jupiter (just as Cronus was overthrown by Zeus in Greek mythology), Saturn managed to maintain his significance in the pantheon of gods for the Romans. His association with agriculture gave him particular significance and associated him with wealth and the good health of the state. His founding of Latium was considered to be a golden age for the Romans, adding to his esteem. Despite famously devouring his own children to prevent being overthrown by them, in both Greek and Roman myth, he was associated with peace and equality by Romans in terms of his dealings with mortals.

© Getty Images

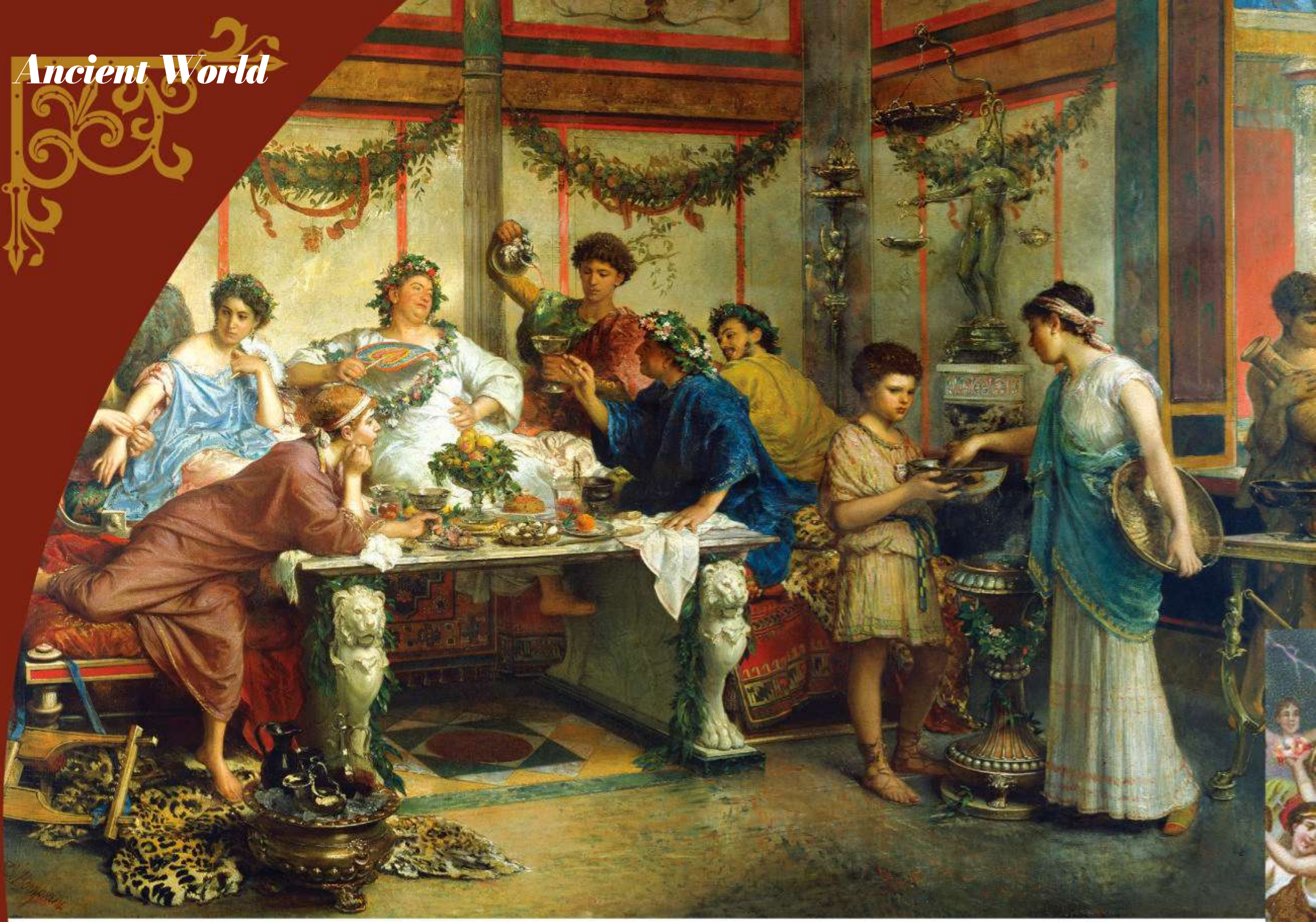


were called sigillarii. Candles represented light returning after the solstice, which in the Roman Julian calendar was 25 December. The wealthy, in particular, were expected to be generous with their money, giving to charity as well as handing out presents. In keeping with the spirit of Saturnalia, some gifts could also be humorous. Augustus was among those who took part, with Suetonius recording that he gave gifts of gold and silver as well as clothing. He also handed out more jokey gifts with double meanings, such as cloth of goat’s hair, sponges, pokers and tongs. He also held blind lotteries for friends at which they didn’t know what they were buying.

Nero, on the other hand, was less generous. One famous story tells of him acting as mock king (despite already being emperor) hoping to embarrass his stepbrother Britannicus by making him sing in front of friends during Saturnalia. Perhaps expecting some protection from the traditions of Saturnalia that allowed for mockery and speaking out against social superiors, Britannicus proceeded to sing about his misfortune, having been passed over for the throne that had belonged to his father Claudius. He is said to have gained the favour of the drunken revellers that day but not long after he was found dead, killed by poison.

Saturnalia certainly took on some interesting characteristics under the emperors. With public events held at arenas and celebrations organised under the auspices of the imperial throne, these events also became a display of their power and generosity. It would be called Saturnalia principis, or ‘the emperor’s Saturnalia’. While it was traditionally a celebration supposed to highlight the liberty and equality of all Romans, it could also be ▶

All images: © Alamy



ABOVE The excesses of Saturnalia were called out by some critics in their own time

a tool for reminding people of the supremacy of the emperor. As a result, Saturnalia could be presented as being gifted to the people by the emperor, which still places their liberty in his hands and benevolence.

As Professor Carole Newlands writes in *The Emperor's Saturnalia: Statius, Silvae 1.6* (*Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text* – Brill, 2002): "Spectacle was integral to the monarchical or imperial process, for by impressing and captivating the people, it persuaded them to acquiesce in a political system where power was unevenly distributed. The political cannot then be separated from the spectacular."

This might seem a little cynical, but the festival was not without its critics even in its own day. The poet Martial wrote about what he saw as the evils of gift giving, the practice seemingly being used among his peers to guarantee favours down the line. He also complained of having things regifted to him from a wealthy friend, including writing tablets, tooth picks, sponges, a napkin, a wine cup, beans, olives, wine, figs and plums, all presented to him by eight slaves. Martial notes that he would have preferred the value in silver one of the slaves might have carried to him. At a later Saturnalia he lamented that he had received no gifts… we wonder why?

Pliny the Younger is reported to have built himself a soundproof room so he could continue working during Saturnalia, so loud were the celebrations in the street. He wrote in his *Epistles*: "When I betake myself into this sitting-room, I seem to be quite away even from my villa, and I find it delightful to sit there, especially during the Saturnalia, when all the rest of the house rings with the merriment and shouts of the festival-makers; for then I do not interfere with their amusements, and they do not distract me from my studies."

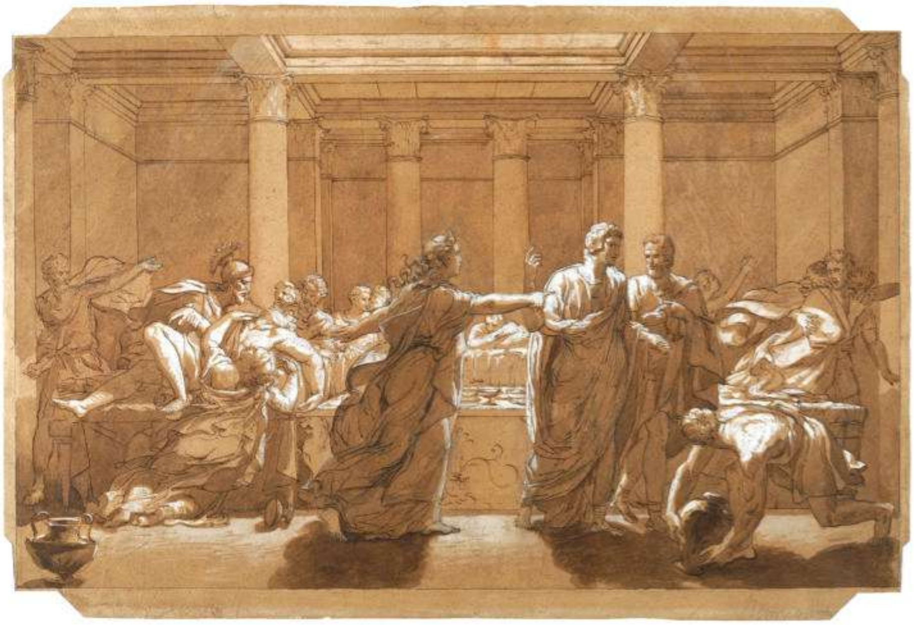
Lucius Annaeus Seneca was even less of a fan, saying: "It is the month of December and yet the city is at this very moment in a sweat. Licence is given to the general merrymaking. Everything resounds with mighty preparations, as if the Saturnalia differed at all from the usual business day! So true it is that the difference is nil, that I regard as correct the remark of the man who said: 'Once December was a month; now it is a year.'" Anyone who finds themselves annoyed by Christmas adverts in September clearly has an ally in Seneca.

As we suggested at the beginning, there are some similarities between Christmas and Saturnalia, but the two festivals actually coexisted for some time. The first recorded Christmas Day was in 336 CE when it was celebrated on 6 January, since no specific date is mentioned for the birth of Christ in the Bible. The date is believed to have moved to 25 December around 354-60 CE, with the first mention of the date being the Nativity of Jesus recorded in the *Chronography of AD 354,* also known as the *Calendar of Philocalus*. This chronicle also recorded the first day of Saturnalia as 17 December, which matches with the longer format of the festival. For the Romans, 25 December had always been the date for the birth of the sun god, Sol Invictus, which closed out the festivities of the previous week of Saturnalia as its own religious observance before work would begin again. It seems likely that as the Romans gradually converted from paganism to

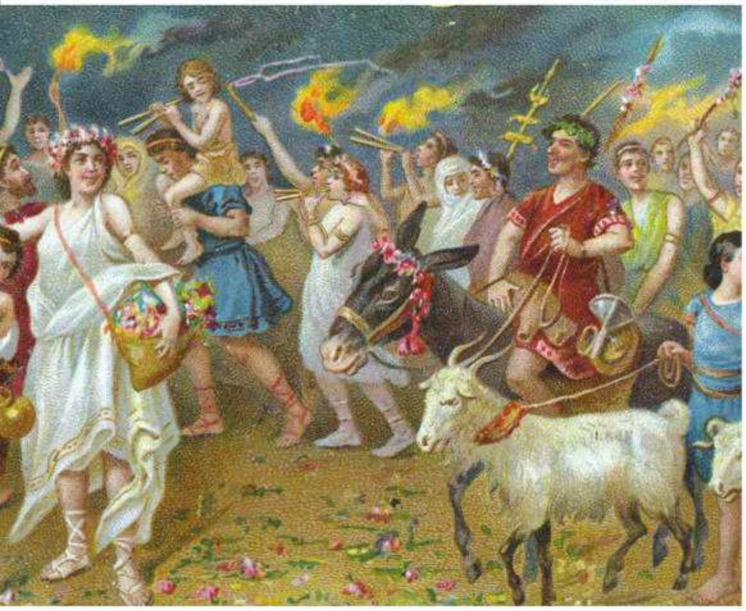
> "Christmas and Saturnalia actually coexisted for some time"

Christianity they chose to maintain some of the key dates and traditions of their old holidays to simplify them and also make them more enticing for new converts.

Things like the candles of Saturnalia are similar to the Advent candles of Christianity and symbolically similar to the burning of the Yule log, which became a common tradition around Europe in later centuries. The decoration of the house with evergreen plants was common for Roman festivals and feasting together was also widespread. Romans even wore cone-shaped hats called pillei which symbolised liberty and dated back to the Greeks, which might be compared to the paper crowns worn today at Christmas. Saturnalia celebrants would also go out into the streets and sing songs to celebrate the festival, as mentioned by Pliny, which has its parallel to carol singing. And, in parts of Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova, the slaughter of a pig around Christmas and New Year is still a common tradition, just as it was an important way to kick off the Saturnalia festival.



ABOVE Nero had Britannicus poisoned following an altercation during Saturnalia



LEFT Wearing bright clothing, singing in the street and partying were all common practices

How direct any of these similarities are is unclear, but we do know that Christian religious leaders saw the threads. There is evidence that Christian leaders, both in ancient Rome and in later years in Europe, would forbid feasting or decorating with evergreens during Christmas, precisely because these were considered pagan traditions and they didn't want them to contaminate or degrade the piety of the day.

Ultimately, Saturnalia did gradually recede into history as the old Roman traditions were supplanted. However, the poet Statius proclaimed of Saturnalia: "Who can sing of the spectacle, the unrestrained mirth, the banqueting, the unbought feast, the lavish streams of wine? Ah! Now I faint, and drunken with thy liquor drag myself at last to sleep. For how many years shall this festival abide! Never shall age destroy so holy a day! While the hills of Latium remain and father Tiber, while thy Rome stands and the Capitol thou hast restored to the world, it shall continue." And in some ways, he wasn't wrong. ○

More Roman Festivals

Other important events in the ancient calendar

Lupercalia

A fertility festival held on 15 February, perhaps linking it with the modern Valentine's Day, and overseen by priests called Luperci. The name is possibly derived from the legendary she-wolf who acted as mother to Romulus and Remus in Roman myth. The Luperci would sacrifice goats and a dog and after a feast would run around striking women with thongs made from the animal skins, supposedly making them fertile.

Quinquatria

This was the festival of Minerva, goddess of wisdom and war as well as craftsmen and the arts, and was held from 19 to 23 March each year. Similar to Saturnalia, the first day was one of religious observance, followed by days of games. It was common to visit a fortune teller during this festival too, given the goddess's connection to them, while the priests of Mars would purify weapons and military equipment.

Floralia

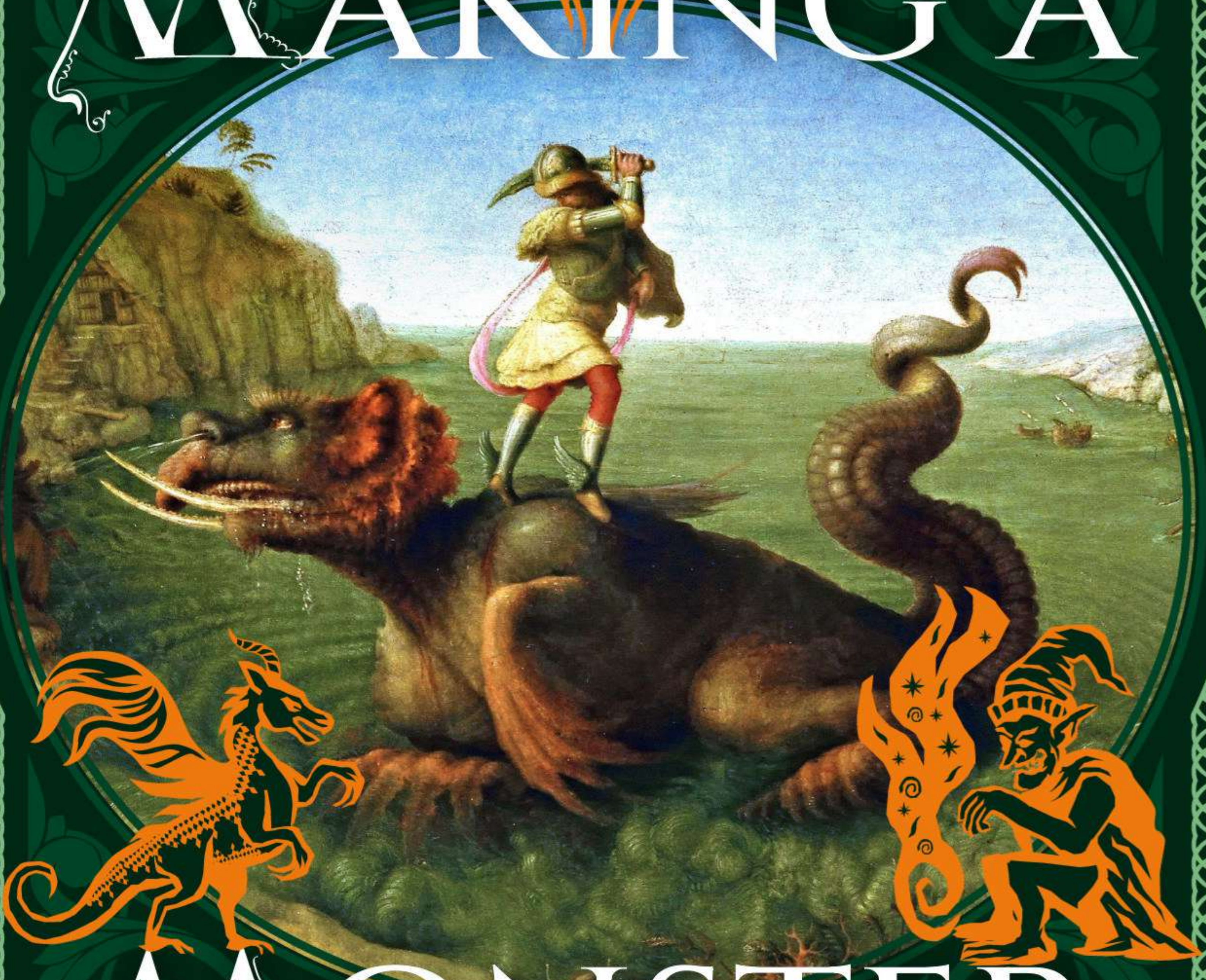
Held in April, this festival in honour of the goddess Flora has its connections to later May Day celebrations. Flora was the goddess of flowers, and temples would be strewn with plants to mark the occasion. Typically the festival would begin on 27 April and last for six days with games being put on by magistrates, called aediles, in order to gain the support of the populace ahead of elections.

Vulcanalia

Honouring the god of fire, Vulcan, this festival was intended to protect precious crops from the summer heat. Held on 23 August, the Vulcanalia would see games and bonfires, with small animals being sacrificed by being thrown into the flames. Vulcan was an important god to the Romans, whom they looked to appease after the Great Fire of Rome and destruction of Pompeii.

All images: © Alamy

MAKING A MONSTER



Natalie Lawrence explores the creation of enchanted creatures through 15,000 years of history

Interview by Emily Staniforth

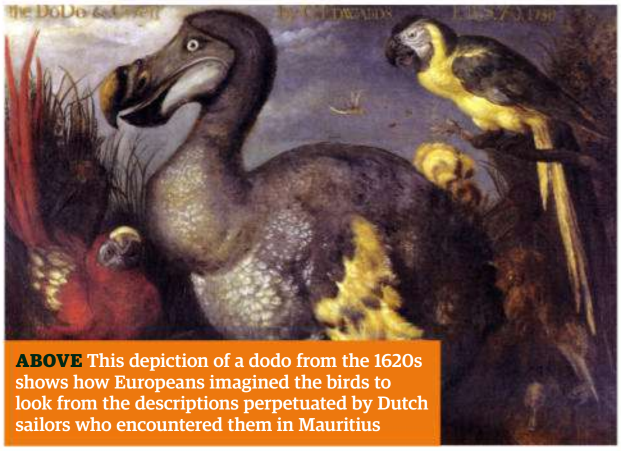
Throughout history, monsters and mythical creatures have haunted the societies and cultures that created them. From hydras to Gorgons to cyborgs, the monsters humans have imagined reflect our worst fears and our darkest nightmares, and can tell us a lot about the times in which they were constructed. Writer Natalie Lawrence explores this phenomenon of monster-making as she tours European history, searching for the anxieties and beliefs that birthed these mystical beasts in her book *Enchanted Creatures: Our Monsters and their Meanings*. We were lucky to sit down with Natalie to discuss her research and all things monstrous.

What first inspired you to go hunting for exotic monsters from Europe's past?

I think I'd always had a fascination with outlier creatures - things like echidnas and platypuses - and I loved the idea of looking at the world through different eyes, from a time when the world seemed unimaginably large and full of wonders. The things that were being discovered in, let's say, the 16th century, when global exploration really kicked off, were from distant places and seemed totally new. I really wanted to inhabit that mindset and to explore these creatures as they were seen several hundred years ago as novel and quasi magical. There was a literal quality to the hunting as well, because I had to leaf through these big tomes with no indices or contents. So you're sifting through to try and find some iteration of a beast that may be there, and then find that it might have been turned into something new that served a different symbolic purpose. It was quite exciting.

What were the first monstrous creatures you found that were shaped by the attitudes and beliefs of a society?

I think the first ones I came across where it was so obvious that something had happened were the birds of paradise. The cultural effects were so clear to me, because they were depicted like angels. They clearly had been given very strong symbolic roles. The birds were totally new to Europeans in the 16th century, so to explain them they made them into angels. There was a physical reason for this, in that when bird of paradise skins arrived in Europe, they had been processed by tribespeople in New Guinea and then traded through Southeast Asia. But the preparation process that they underwent initially was to have their legs, wings and internal organs removed, and then the skins were smoked to preserve them. The birds often arrived in Europe with these amazing, gorgeous plumes that the birds of paradise have, which looked like they were sprouting from these tiny shrivelled bodies. They looked unfamiliar because they didn't have any of the normal appendages of birds. They were something alternate. They didn't fit into the categories of animals that Aristotle had laid out, which natural history was based upon at the time. You have these incredible plumed creatures that aren't like other birds arriving from this exotic Eastern paradise, which is meant to be full of wonders and riches, and so rather than just say "well, they're just birds with their legs cut off", they become something with more meaning and value. It meant the birds, or angels, slotted somewhere higher up in the cosmic order.



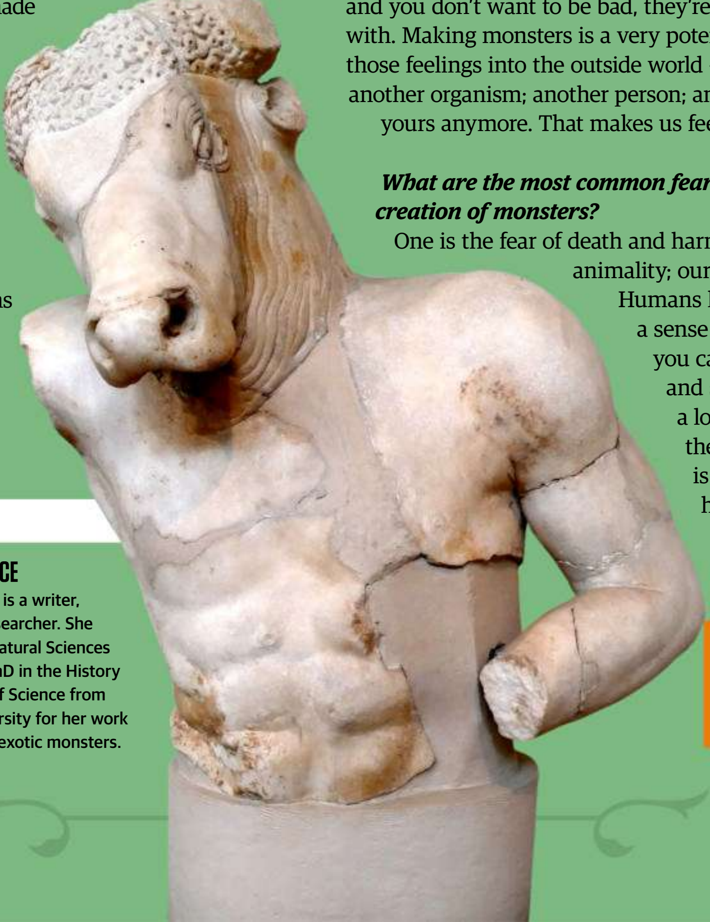
ABOVE This depiction of a dodo from the 1620s shows how Europeans imagined the birds to look from the descriptions perpetuated by Dutch sailors who encountered them in Mauritius

Why has the idea and the fear of monsters always been prevalent throughout different societies and cultures?

We need ways of splitting things off that we don't want inside us. It's very difficult to be human and have self-awareness in societies where you have moral structures, if you have to keep everything inside. Everyone has dark parts within them somewhere, even just metaphorically, and in a society where those things are bad and you don't want to be bad, they're powerful emotions to deal with. Making monsters is a very potent mechanism for pushing those feelings into the outside world - projecting them onto another organism; another person; another entity, so they're not yours anymore. That makes us feel better.

What are the most common fears that have influenced the creation of monsters?

One is the fear of death and harm. We're terrified of our own animality; our own organic limitations. Humans have a sense of foresight and a sense of self to deal with, and if you can project into the future and see your death, that's quite a lot to take on. That's what the opening of Pandora's Box is about! The fear of being hurt or death is definitely something that has generated monsters. ▶



LEFT The creation of monsters as hybrid creatures, like the Minotaur who had the head of a bull, reflected the relationship between humans and animals

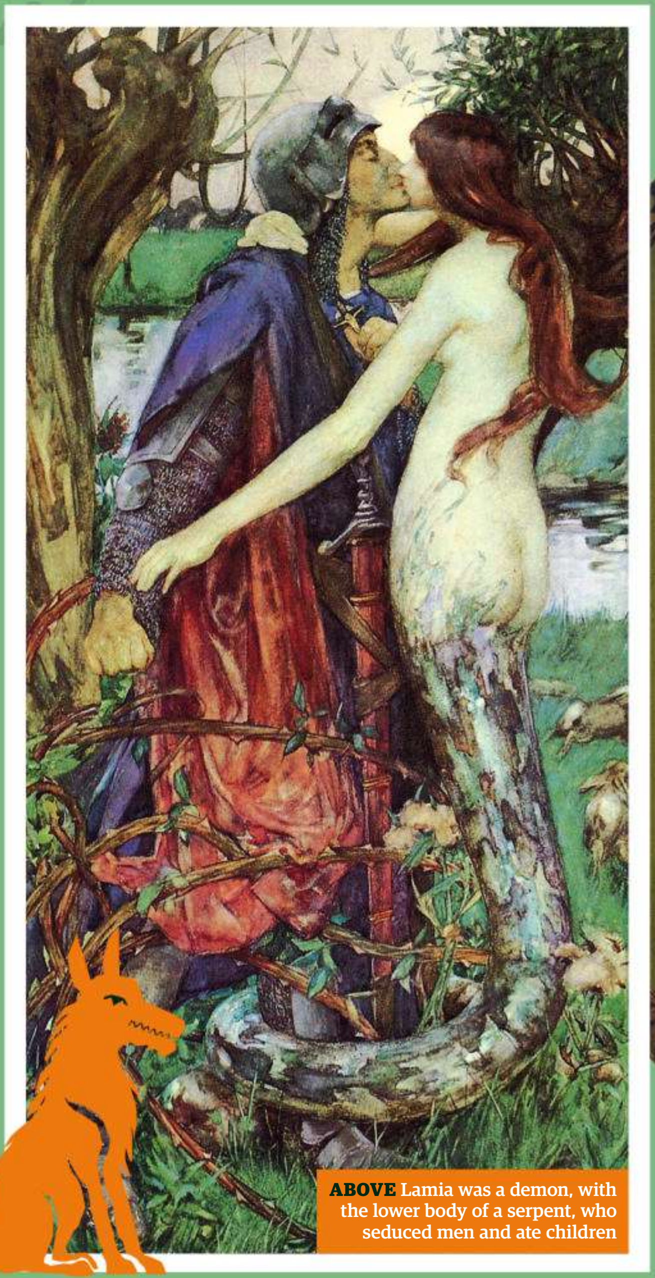
All images: © Getty Images, © Alamy

EXPERT BIO

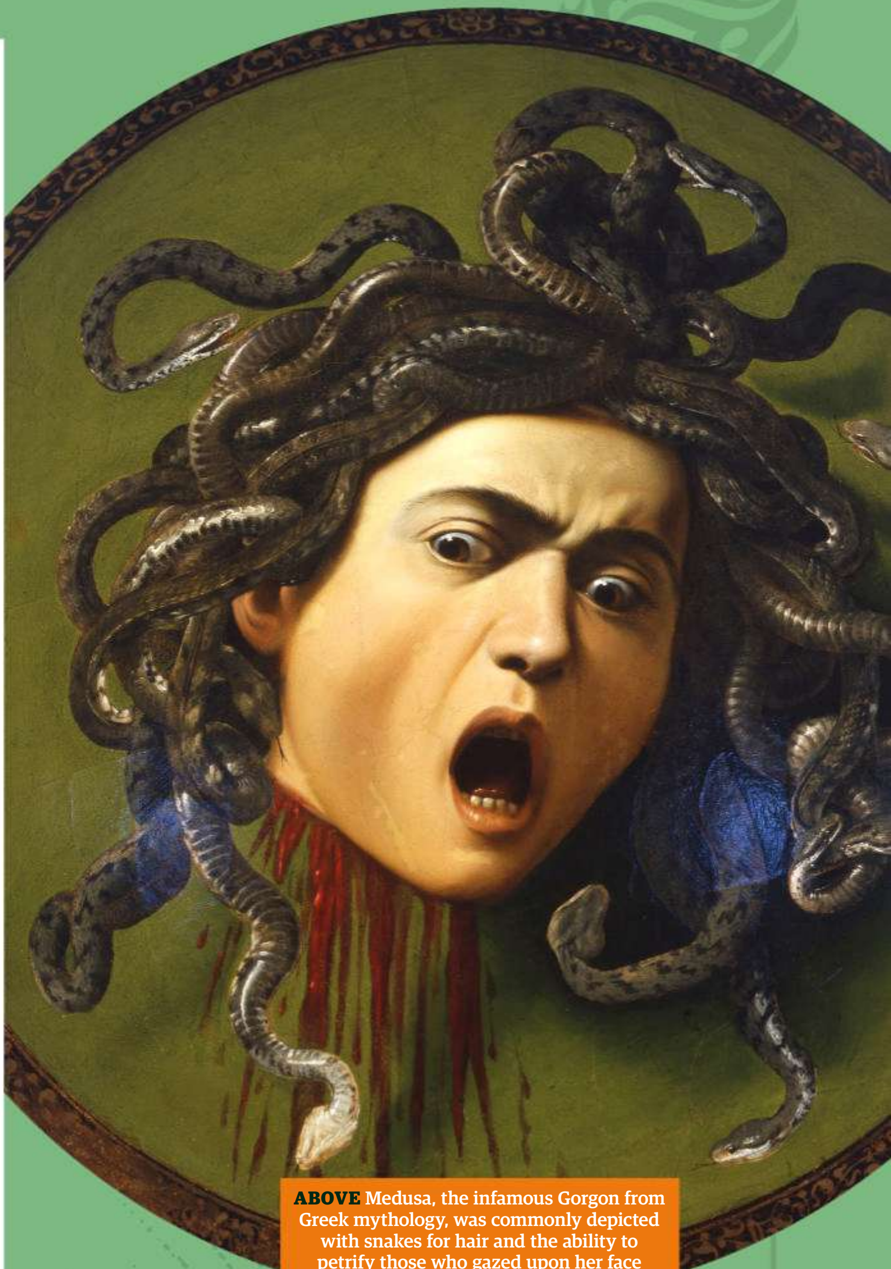
© Talie Eigeland

NATALIE LAWRENCE

Natalie Lawrence is a writer, illustrator and researcher. She has a degree in Natural Sciences and received a PhD in the History and Philosophy of Science from Cambridge University for her work on early modern exotic monsters.



ABOVE Lamia was a demon, with the lower body of a serpent, who seduced men and ate children



ABOVE Medusa, the infamous Gorgon from Greek mythology, was commonly depicted with snakes for hair and the ability to petrify those who gazed upon her face

There's also fear of the 'Other' and that is essentially what monster making is. 'Othering' is a commonly used term, and a politically very complicated one at the moment. I think there's an evolutionary basis for this, in that being able to identify individuals who are going to stick to their social contracts with you is an evolutionary advantage. It also gives you the opportunity to project out the things that you don't want in your society onto others. For example, early European depictions of natives in South America or North America portrayed them as cannibals – because that was something humans were not supposed to do, and something that it had always been imagined that 'savages' did. Foreign native people were depicted as monstrous in all sorts of ways – they had heads in their chests or they only had one foot and they did monstrous things that were inhuman. Europeans made other races into monsters as an easy way to represent the fear of difference and otherness. It also was a colonial mechanism that justified the ability to colonise. It was viewed that if native people were monstrous, Europeans could take over and 'civilise' the land.

> "MAKING MONSTERS IS A VERY POTENT MECHANISM FOR PUSHING THOSE FEELINGS INTO THE OUTSIDE WORLD"

Are there any creatures you have researched that you found particularly fascinating?

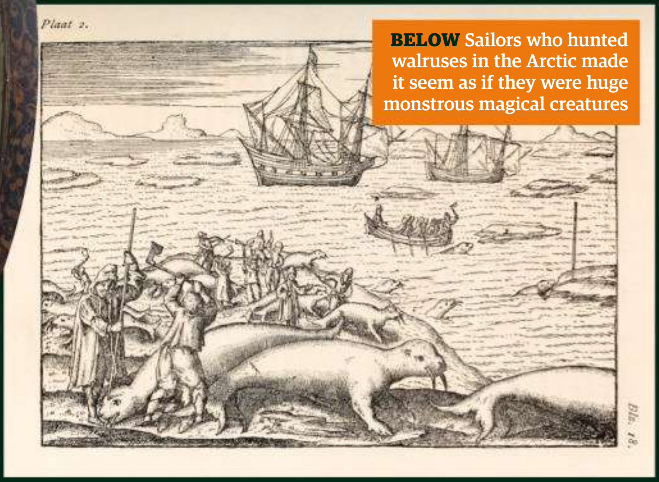
I do really like small-scale mysteries like the early modern monsters that I talk about in the book. The way you can piece those together and see how they were constructed fascinates me. I really like the ones that speak most about our relationship with nature, so I think the snake women possibly are some of my favourites. Things like Medusa and Lamia represent such fundamental things about the human

condition and are so ubiquitous. That symbolism is repeated over time and place, which tells us a lot about how our relationship with nature and our own vulnerability has changed.

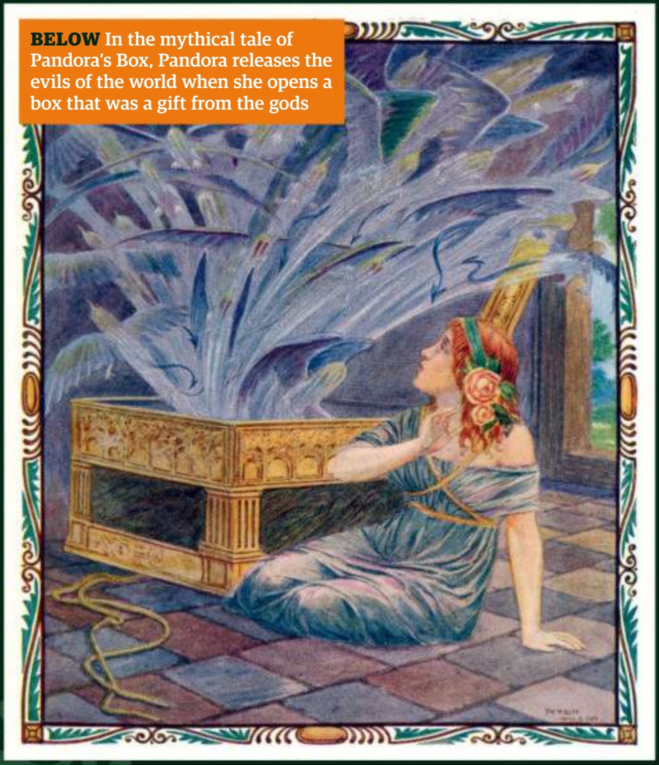
The history of the dodo, a famous example of an extinct bird, was also interesting. Dutch ships trying to sail to Southeast Asia in the 16th century used Mauritius as a stopping off point and found the weirdest creatures, like these big fat birds that didn't seem to want to run away. The sailors had a great time because they could eat dodos, much better than the reserved food on board, and when they got home, they told stories about these vast birds that couldn't fly, which immediately made dodos seem slightly monstrous. Sailors also said that the meat was really greasy and it made them a bit nauseous. Ships used to stop at Mauritius regularly after that, but no dodos really came back to Europe because they were eaten before they made it. There were bits of beak and foot that arrived, and then there were these stories of this fatty meat that had been circulated after that first voyage, so it got built up in European natural history that the dodo was this massive, obese bird that could barely walk and dragged itself along the ground. But then it died out very quickly and no one really knew what a dodo was like for a very long time. It took paleobiologists to reconstruct it recently from some actual specimens that have been found, and it turns out it was probably quite a zippy bird that was lithe and ran fairly fast.

The walrus was another strange case where there was lots of contact for sailors going hunting in the Arctic from the 16th century. Walrus ivory, blubber and skins were really valuable so sailors hunted walruses, chopped them up and brought them back. But no one brought a whole walrus back and obviously, if you're a hunter going out into the Arctic and essentially risking your life in difficult conditions to bring back these products, it probably seems like you're fighting monsters. Also, if you can make something magical, it's worth more. If you can sell walrus skins as this impossibly strong material which has come from a magical beast in the northern seas, it's going to make more money.

One of the funniest stories about the walrus from some late medieval or early Renaissance texts is that they would use their tusks like ice picks and climb up the ice, in great big herds, and just stick them in and hang and then fall asleep. Then hunters would sneak up on them, tie a rope around their tails and then spook them and the walruses would jump off into the seas leaving their skins behind. The poor skinless walruses would wash up later on the shore dead.


Plaat 2.
Blz. 18.

BELOW Sailors who hunted walruses in the Arctic made it seem as if they were huge monstrous magical creatures

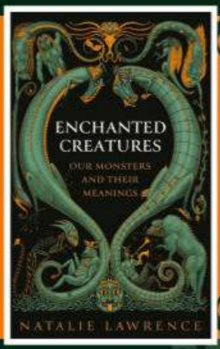


BELOW In the mythical tale of Pandora's Box, Pandora releases the evils of the world when she opens a box that was a gift from the gods

What would you like readers to know about your book Enchanted Creatures?

It's a history of our relationship with other animals, nature and our own animality at one level, but it's also an exploration of how we've psychologically dealt with the darker aspects of being human. I used science, history, psychology and other areas to answer these important questions, but I think there's a lot more to say as well. I've shied away from some topics, especially more politically hot potato ones, but I think it's very important to think about these things, to understand ourselves better. Though so much has changed over time, being human hasn't changed that much – monsters and their stories still speak to us so powerfully, even if we don't quite know why. The different kinds of monsters also show that there are lots of different ways of framing the world. I focused on Europe, but if you look at the way that monsters are done in other traditions, there's slight interesting differences which say a lot about the differences between, for example, Judeo-Christian perspectives and Eastern perspectives. ◆

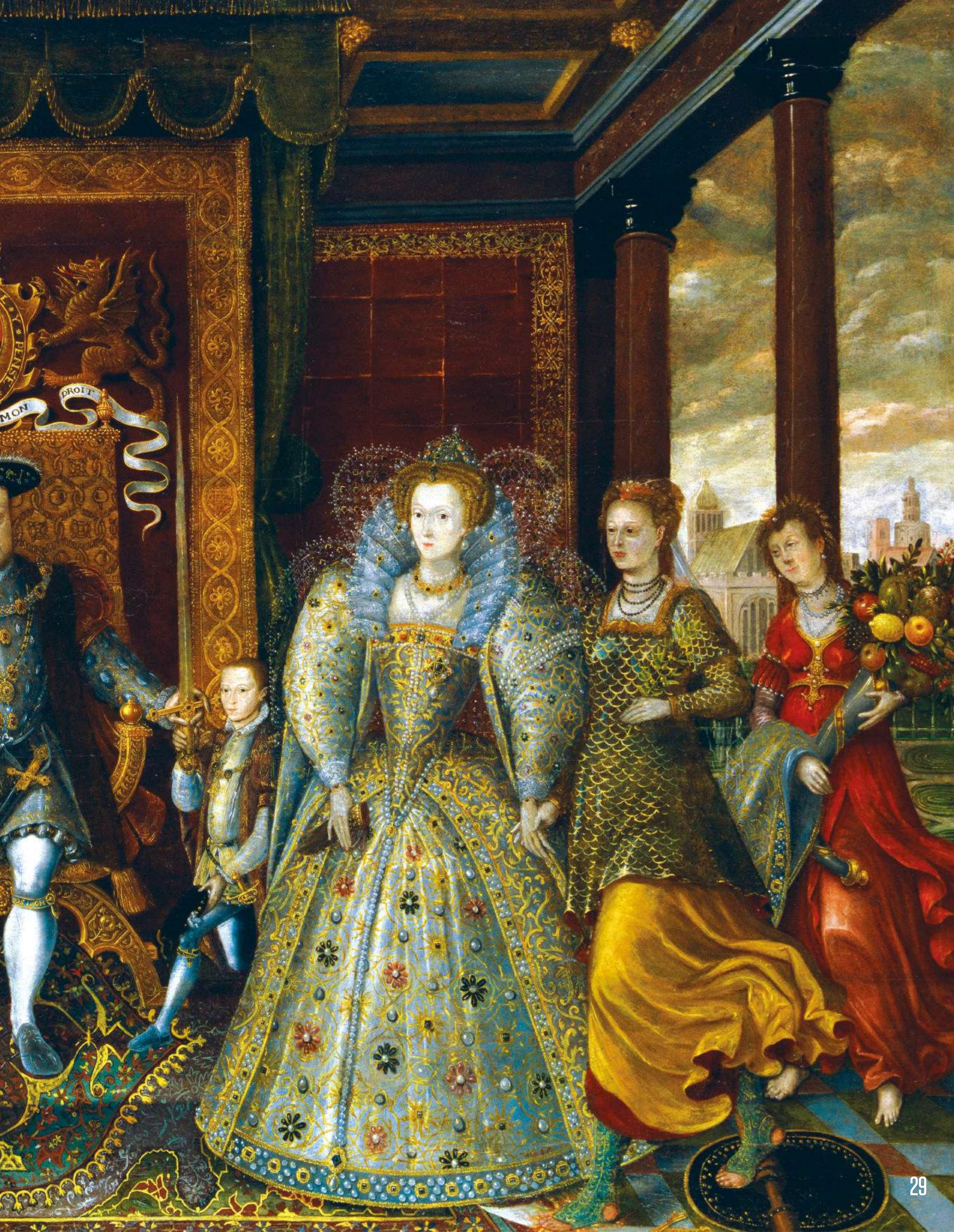
ENCHANTED CREATURES:
OUR MONSTERS AND THEIR MEANING
(WEIDENFELD & NICOLSON, 2024)
IS AVAILABLE TO BUY NOW



All images: © Getty Images; © Alamy

ROYAL HISTORY

© Alamy


PENSE
MON
DROIT

RISE OF THE TUDORS

How an upstart noble family emerged from the Wars of the Roses to rule England

Written by Susan Abernethy

The life of Margaret Beaufort epitomises the medieval concept of the Wheel of Fortune, the capricious nature of Fate, with its violent tenor of life. The Wars of the Roses (1455–85) had a disastrous effect on many an English noble, perhaps none more so than Margaret. But with her formidable and adaptable personality, along with her consummate diplomatic skills, she survived the turns of the Wheel long enough to see her son Henry Tudor ascend to the English throne and establish one of the world's most famous royal dynasties.

LANCASTER VS YORK

At the foundation of the Wars of the Roses was a family conflict originating with the many children of King Edward III. It would come down ▶

Illustration by: Kevin McGivern

to the descendants of his sons Edmund of Langley, the 1st Duke of York; and John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster. When Gaunt's son Henry Bolingbroke deposed his cousin King Richard II from the throne, he became the first Lancastrian king, Henry IV. The House of Lancaster ruled until the ill-fated reign of Henry VI, who suffered from an inherited mental illness.

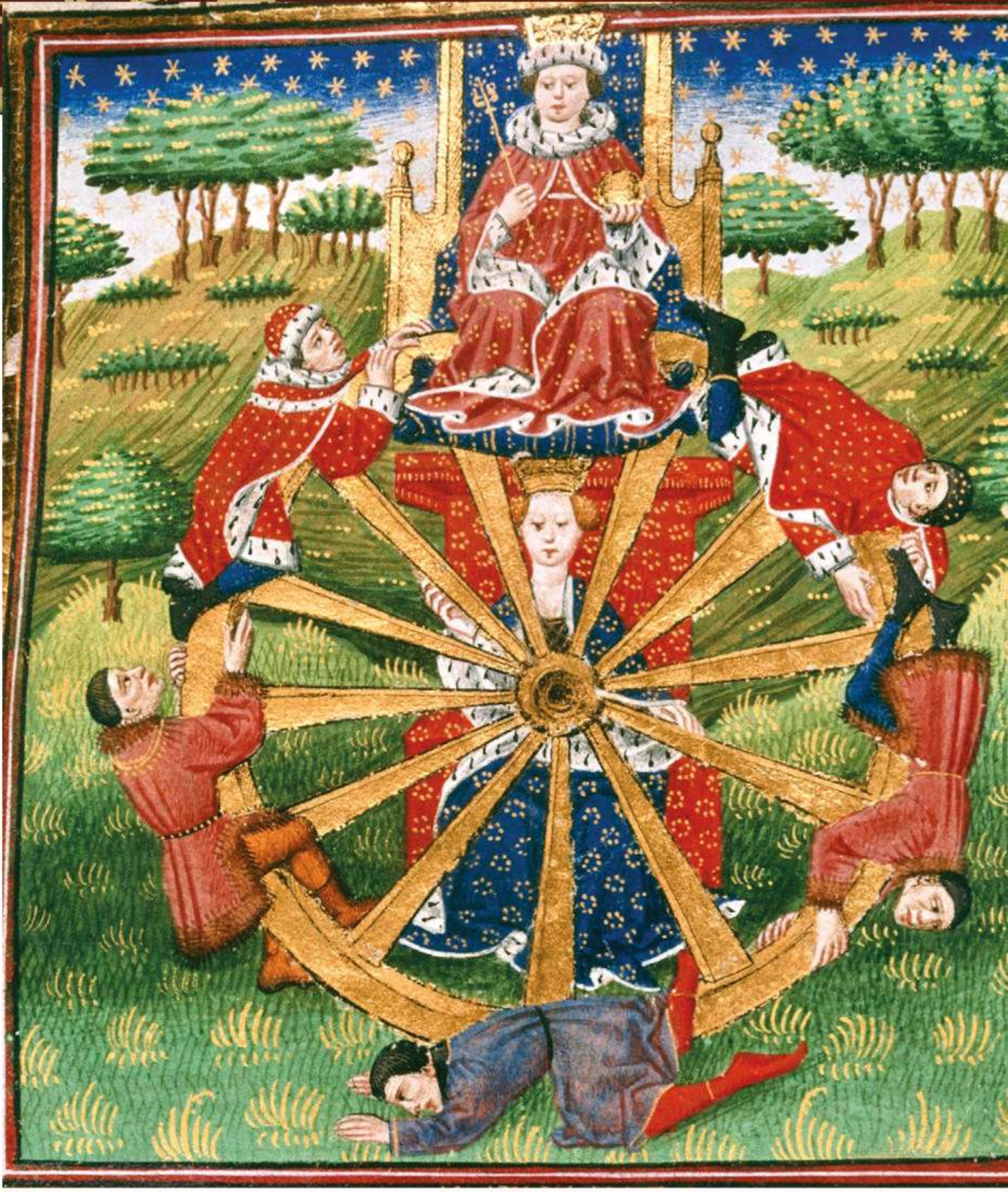
Gaunt also had several children, who took the surname of Beaufort, with his mistress, Katherine Swynford. The Lancastrian duke later married Swynford and had their children legitimised. All the legitimate Lancastrian families either passed away or had no surviving children, leaving only the Beaufort descendants. Margaret Beaufort was a great-granddaughter of Gaunt, the last living male-line survivor, and heiress of an exceedingly valuable patrimony. Elizabeth Norton, Margaret's biographer, states that Margaret's claim to the throne was widely known and acknowledged by her contemporaries and she was very proud of her royal status.

Richard, 3rd Duke of York, and later his son, Edward, Earl of March, pressed their claim to the throne after Henry VI's reign devolved into chaos, resulting in a years-long cycle of battles. Add into the mix, the Tudors. Once Henry VI's mother Queen Catherine of Valois became a widow, she married Owen Tudor, a Welsh squire. Henry VI ennobled their two eldest sons, Jasper and Edmund, staunch Lancastrian supporters, giving them the earldoms of Bedford and Richmond respectively. Edmund Tudor married Margaret Beaufort in November 1455.

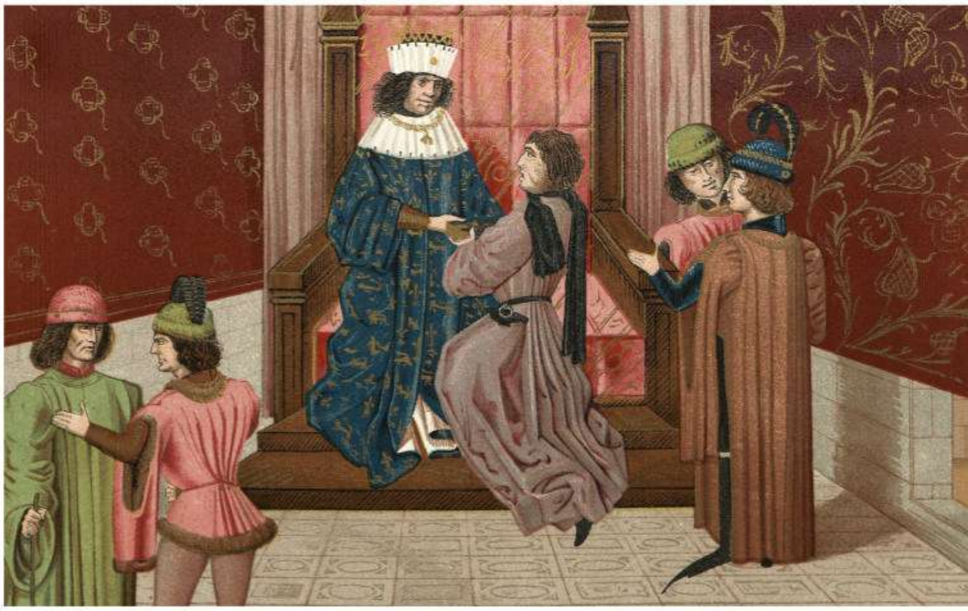
In a decidedly controversial move, in order to gain possession of Margaret's considerable domains and income, Edmund consummated the marriage when she was 12 years old. Following the death of her husband a year later, Margaret was seven months pregnant and in dire straits. Under the guardianship of her brother-in-law Jasper at Pembroke Castle, she survived a difficult childbirth. Henry Tudor was born.

HENRY'S EARLY YEARS

Historical sources for the first 14 years of Henry's life are obscure. As an infant, he probably lived with his mother at Pembroke. The Battle of Towton took place in September 1461 and resulted in the fall of the Lancastrian monarchy and the rise of the Yorkist king, Edward IV. The Lancastrian castle of Pembroke came under siege by the Yorkist noble William Herbert and surrendered on 30 September,



ABOVE Illuminated image of the Wheel of Fortune, depicting Fortune herself seated behind the Wheel

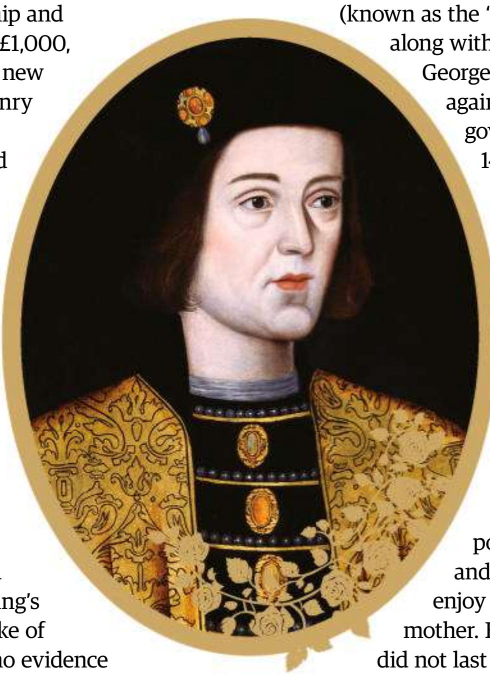


RIGHT 15th century image of the Yorkist King Edward IV of England and his brother Richard, Duke of Gloucester

“MARGARET BEAUFORT’S CLAIM TO THE THRONE WAS WIDELY KNOWN AND ACKNOWLEDGED BY HER CONTEMPORARIES”

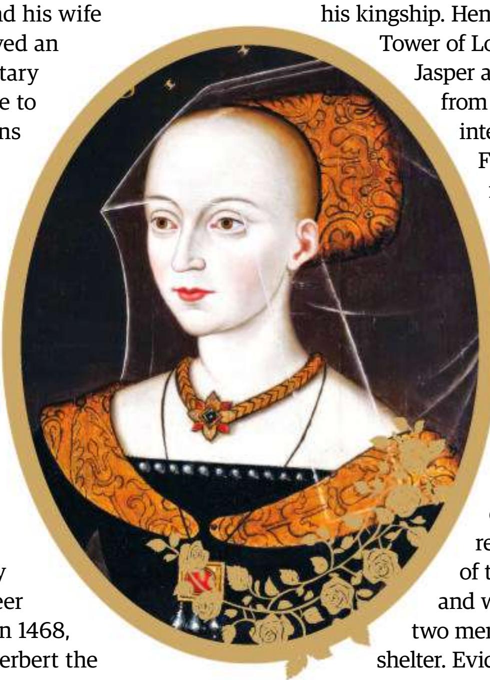
forever altering the prospects and circumstances of the young Henry Tudor.

In February 1462, Lord Herbert bought Henry’s guardianship and marriage rights for £1,000, and by August, the new regime stripped Henry of the Richmond honour he inherited from his father. Jasper also forfeited his earldom of Pembroke. Edward IV’s brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, received the Richmond and Pembroke lands. A later mandate gave the Richmond patrimony to the king’s brother George, Duke of Clarence. There is no evidence the Duke of Gloucester ever took possession of the Pembroke lands.



LEFT Edward IV battled for the Yorkist cause

Living mostly in the Herbert stronghold of Raglan Castle under the aegis of William Herbert and his wife Anne, Henry received an education and military training appropriate to his rank. Discussions ensued regarding the marriage of Henry to Herbert’s daughter Maud. The young man impressed his mentors with his intelligence and quick capacity for learning. He seemed likely to marry into a prominent Yorkist family and possibly pursue a court career under Edward IV. In 1468, the king granted Herbert the earldom of Pembroke.



BELOW-LEFT Elizabeth Woodville’s marriage to Edward proved controversial

Margaret, expecting the recovery of her son’s guardianship, the restoration of his lands and the title of Richmond, chose to enter negotiations. But in the spring of 1469, the king’s former collaborator and mentor Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick (known as the ‘Kingmaker’), along with the king’s brother George, started a rebellion against Edward’s government. In July 1469, the Battle of Edgcote claimed Lord Herbert’s life, yet Henry remained at Raglan until Henry VI’s October 1470 restoration to the throne again changed his circumstances. Jasper took possession of Henry, and he was able to enjoy the company of his mother. But the good times did not last long as Edward, who had fled to the Continent, returned with an army to gain back his throne. Following the fateful Battle of Tewkesbury in 1471, Edward IV regained his kingship. Henry VI died in the Tower of London soon after. Jasper and Henry fled from Tenby in Wales, intending to go to France. Bad weather in the Channel forced them off course, causing them to land in Brittany, where they remained in exile for 14 years.

THE TUDORS IN EXILE

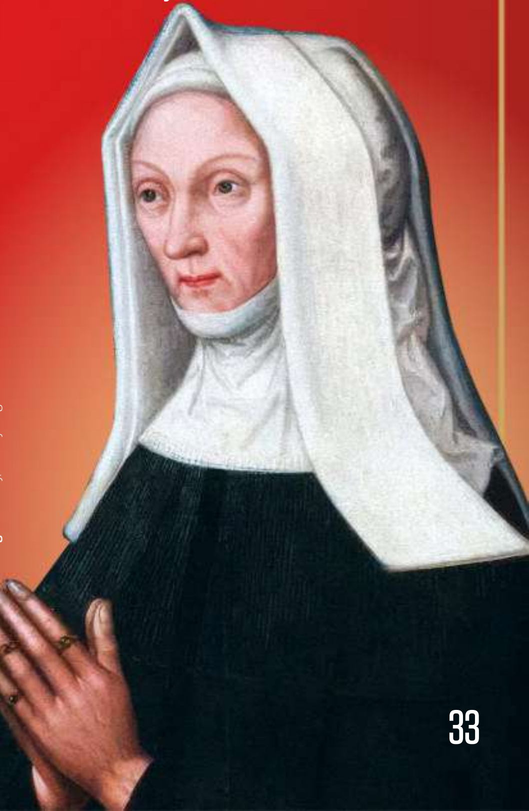
The Breton duke, Francis II, realised the value of the refugees and welcomed the two men, giving them shelter. Evidence suggests Henry and Jasper lived in relative comfort and freedom in Brittany, despite being a financial burden on the duke. Intermittently, over the next 14 years,

MATRIARCH OF THE TUDORS

The many marriages of Lady Margaret Beaufort were made for political purposes

Margaret Beaufort, great-granddaughter of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, was born in 1443, the daughter of Margaret Beauchamp of Bletsoe and John Beaufort, 1st Duke of Somerset. When Margaret was six years old, the Earl of Suffolk arranged for her to marry his eight-year-old son John de la Pole. They were only children and when Suffolk was disgraced a year later, the marriage was annulled. Margaret never referred to de la Pole as her husband. Edmund Tudor and Margaret were married in 1455. He died in November 1456, before his son Henry Tudor was born in January 1457. Margaret, in need of protection, married Henry Stafford, son of the Duke of Buckingham, in 1458.

Stafford died of wounds suffered in the Battle of Barnet in April 1471 while fighting on the Yorkist side. Margaret married her third and final husband, Thomas Stanley, 1st Earl of Derby, in 1472. Thomas Stanley and his brother William were staunch supporters of the Yorkist kings and benefited greatly, gaining lands, income and offices. Both men were present at the Battle of Bosworth. Thomas held back with his men, but the battle would turn to Henry Tudor’s favour when William Stanley joined his side in the fight. Thomas Stanley purportedly found Richard III’s crown in a bush on the field and put it on the victorious Henry Tudor’s head.



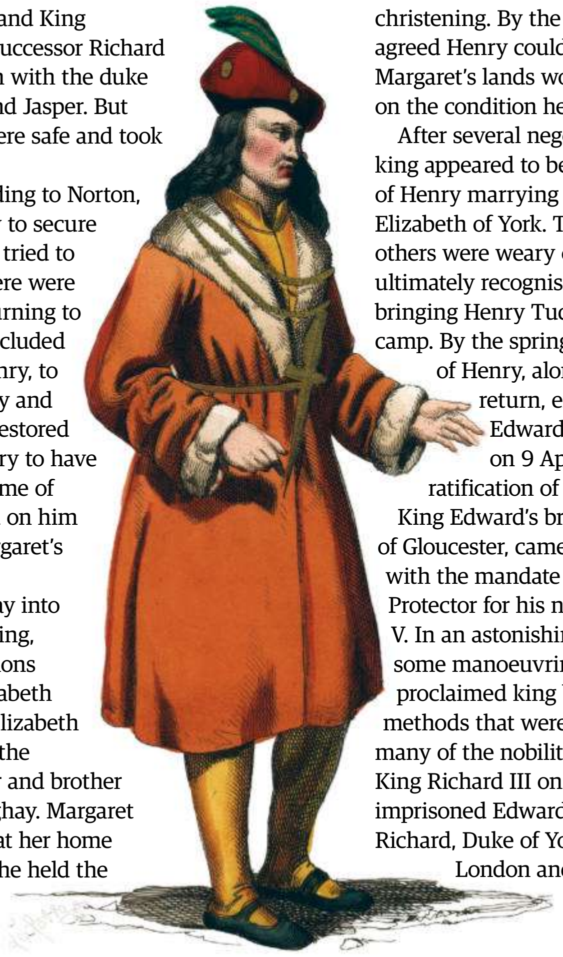
All images: © Alamy, © Getty Images

"HENRY TUDOR SEEMED LIKELY TO MARRY INTO A PROMINENT YORKIST FAMILY AND POSSIBLY PURSUE A COURT CAREER UNDER EDWARD IV"

the French King Louis XI and King Edward IV, as well as his successor Richard III, tried to strike a bargain with the duke to get custody of Henry and Jasper. But Francis made sure they were safe and took none of the offers.

In the meantime, according to Norton, Margaret worked tirelessly to secure Henry's rehabilitation and tried to persuade King Edward there were advantages to her son returning to England. Her objectives included obtaining a pardon for Henry, to have his father's patrimony and title of Earl of Richmond restored to him, to arrange for Henry to have some of the land and income of her own mother bestowed on him and for him to inherit Margaret's domains on her demise.

Margaret worked her way into the favour of the Yorkist king, maintaining friendly relations with Edward's queen, Elizabeth Woodville. She attended Elizabeth and her daughters during the reburial of Edward's father and brother in the church of Fotheringhay. Margaret also entertained the king at her home during his reign. In 1482 she held the king's youngest daughter, Bridget, during her christening. By the summer, Edward agreed Henry could get a share of Margaret's lands worth £400 per annum on the condition he returned to England.



After several negotiating sessions, the king appeared to be amenable to the idea of Henry marrying his eldest daughter, Elizabeth of York. The king and many others were weary of the civil strife and ultimately recognised the benefit of bringing Henry Tudor into the Yorkist camp. By the spring of 1483, a draft pardon of Henry, along with the terms of his return, existed. However, King Edward's unexpected death on 9 April 1483 prevented the ratification of the deal.

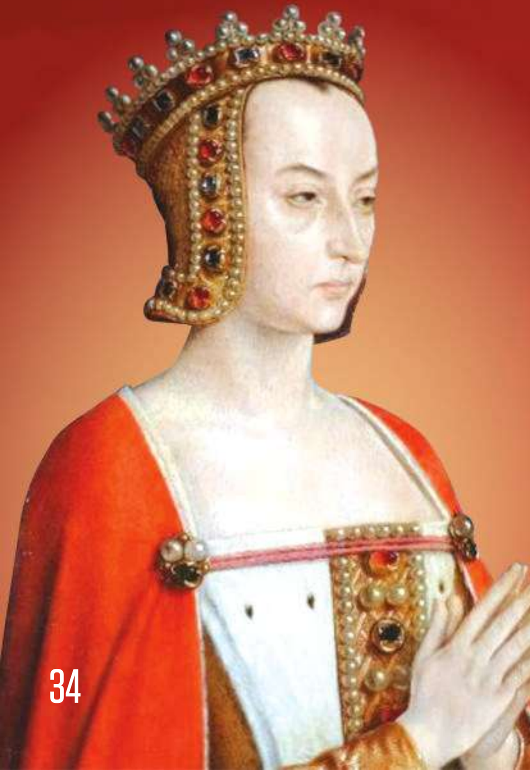
King Edward's brother Richard, Duke of Gloucester, came to London ostensibly with the mandate to become Lord Protector for his nephew, King Edward V. In an astonishing turn of events, after some manoeuvring, Richard had himself proclaimed king by Parliament, using methods that were not approved of by many of the nobility. Richard was crowned King Richard III on 6 July. King Richard imprisoned Edward V and his brother, Richard, Duke of York, in the Tower of London and they were never seen again.

HENRY'S SHOT OF BOURBON

Henry Tudor would not have been successful in his enterprise without Anne de Beaujeu

Her father, King Louis XI of France, described Anne de Beaujeu as the least foolish of her sex in the kingdom, which contained no wise ones. She inherited a great deal of intelligence from her father and had a ten-year apprenticeship under him, studying his political methods. Known as Madame la Grande, she married a younger son of the Duke of Bourbon, Pierre de Beaujeu. When King Louis died in 1483, leaving his minor son and heir Charles VIII to succeed him, he never named Anne as official regent, but the French court and foreign emissaries fully recognised her as the true ruler of France.

During the eight years she controlled the government, she adroitly guided the country through a series of political crises that threatened France both internally and externally. Anne's handling of these events as a young woman in her twenties is nothing short of astonishing. She could assess a situation and either pre-empt it or react appropriately, rarely making a wrong decision. Her rule lasted until her brother declared his independence and she retired to her estates in the Duchy of Bourbon. When she was eased out of power after the death of her brother, she left the country more stable than when she started her rule, an unusual feat for a regency. Anne had integrity and moral stature to complement her political skills. As her father stated, she was a woman who commanded admiration.



All images: © Alamy, © Getty Images

LEFT Richard III ascended the throne after his nephews were pronounced illegitimate

BELOW-LEFT Pierre Landais, Breton politician and advisor to Francis II, Duke of Brittany. He nearly surrendered Henry and Jasper Tudor to King Richard III

A DARING ESCAPE TO FRANCE

Some agreed with the situation, but many found this state of affairs unsatisfactory. It is difficult to say when people considered Henry Tudor as an alternative to Richard III as king, but certainly by the autumn rebellion began in certain quarters and many left England to join Henry in France. The Duke of Buckingham rose in revolt against Richard III in October 1483. The Dowager Queen Elizabeth Woodville, as well as Margaret Beaufort, at the very least, assented to the rebellion, and at most, had a hand in planning it.

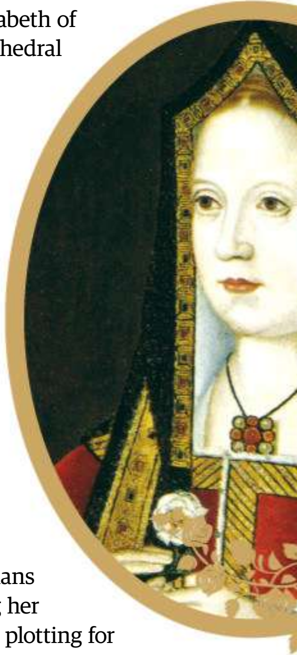
Where Margaret had trusted Edward IV in negotiating Henry's return, she probably feared Richard III's treachery. Because of the king's suspicions of Margaret, he placed her under a kind of house arrest. Despite her isolation in the north, her loyal servants enabled her to maintain contact with her son. Her current husband turned a blind eye to Margaret's activities and did not restrain her.

Henry had every intention of joining the Duke of Buckingham and the rebels with an invasion, and King Richard now had excellent reasons to want to capture him and bring him back to England. After Buckingham's rebellion, the number of exiles in Brittany increased exponentially and about 400 of them were living in Vannes. Yet Duke Francis agreed to pay out over 5,600 livres to his impoverished English guests. Henry, encouraged by the newly arrived exiles, swore an oath to marry Elizabeth of York in Vannes cathedral at Christmas.

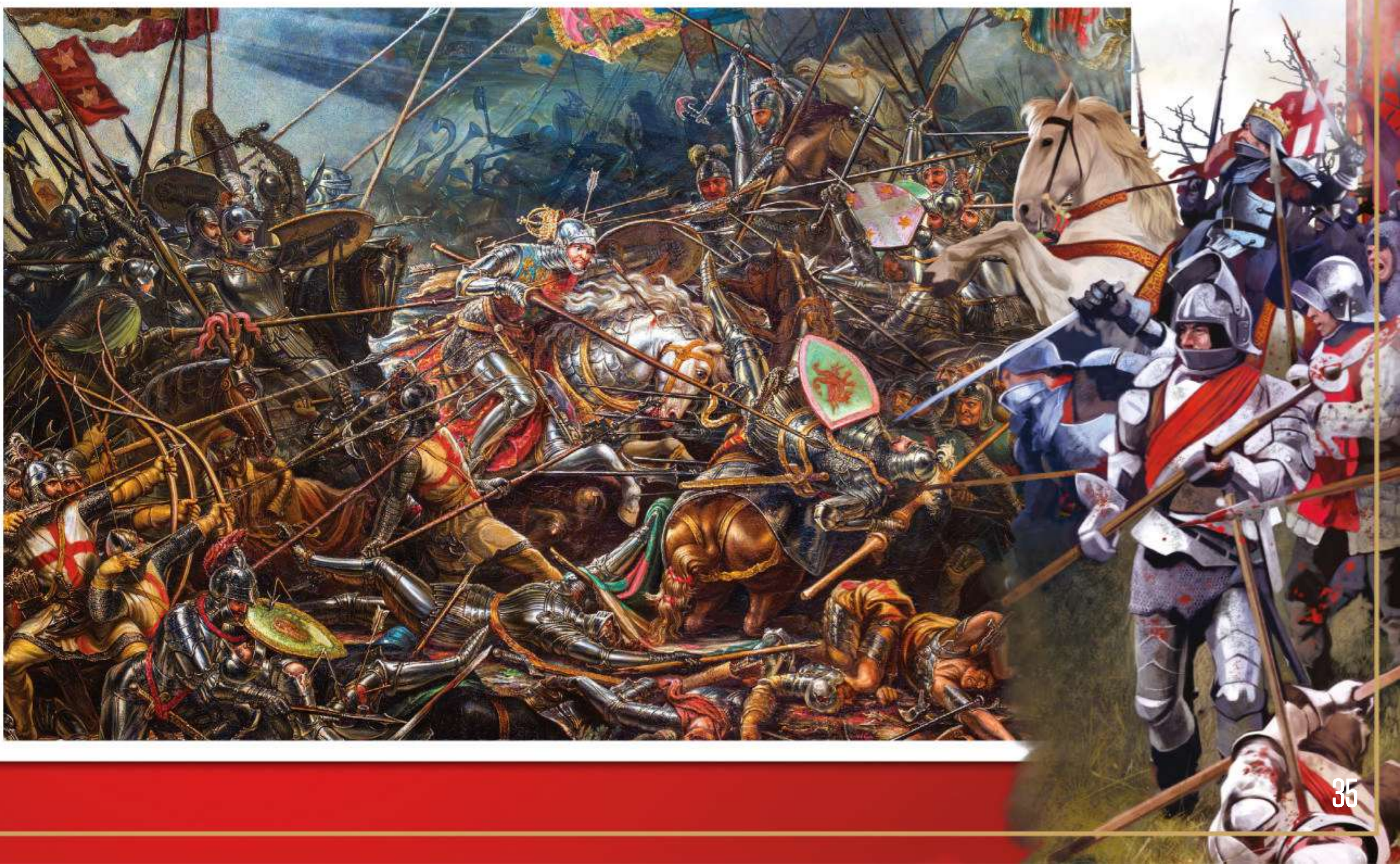
Following this scene, according to the Tudor historian Polydore Virgil, those present swore a further oath to recognise Henry as king. Ralph A Griffiths and Roger S Thomas, in *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty*, state it is unclear exactly when Margaret transformed her plans from rehabilitating her son's patrimony to plotting for his accession, but they believe "the disappearance of the princes was probably a crucial factor in making up her mind."

Richard stepped up his efforts, doing everything in his power to negotiate the surrender of Henry Tudor, including sending diplomats to Brittany, France and the papal court. This shows he believed Tudor was a threat. Duke Francis had become very ill and was increasingly of unsound mind. The duke's chancellor, Pierre Landais, received the messengers from King Richard; Landais needed allies, as he remained unpopular with the Breton nobility, who resented his influence over the duke.

The wily old French King Louis XI died in August 1483. His admiration of the political skills of his eldest daughter, Anne de Beaujeu, had led him to give her and her husband Pierre physical custody of his minor son, King Charles VIII, along with other important offices and duties. Never officially given the title of regent, Anne ruled unquestionably as if she had all the rights and privileges of that designation, pulling the strings of government through her congenial husband, who served as president of the



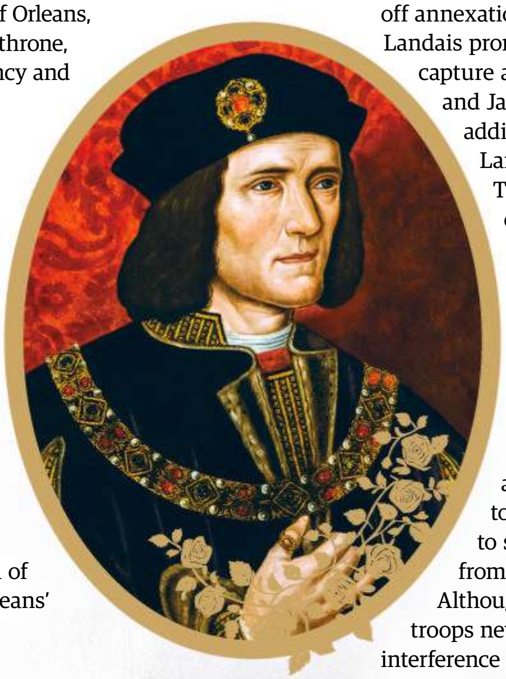
RIGHT Elizabeth of York, eldest daughter of the King Edward IV and the first queen consort of the Tudor dynasty as the wife of Henry VII



BELOW Henry is believed to have been outnumbered at the Battle of Bosworth Field regency council. Louis, Duke of Orleans, the current heir to the French throne, believed he deserved the regency and resented Anne and Pierre.

One of Anne's primary objectives was the annexation of the ancient and independent Duchy of Brittany to France. She would use any means at her disposal, including using Henry Tudor, to fulfil her ambitions. In addition, her regency was under serious threat from the Duke of Orleans. Landais had made an alliance with Orleans, and they wanted to add England to this coalition. The terms of the deal involved the invasion of France by England to help Orleans' effort to become regent.

Richard promised to send a contingent of archers to aid in securing Duke Francis' power against the rebellious Breton nobility and to fight off annexation by France. In return, Landais promised to arrange for the capture and extradition of Henry and Jasper from Brittany. Richard additionally pledged to give Landais the income from Tudor's confiscated earldom of Richmond.



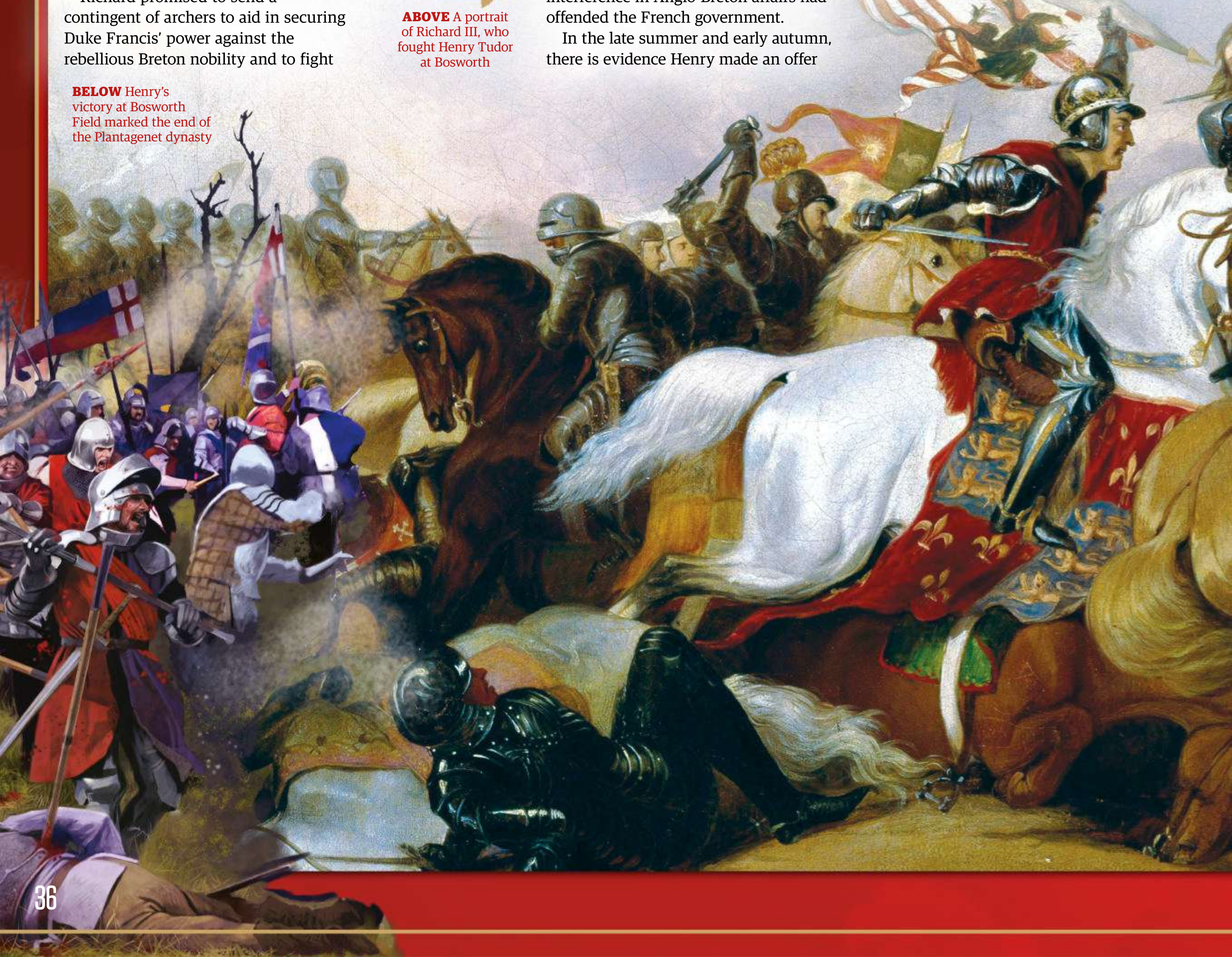
ABOVE A portrait of Richard III, who fought Henry Tudor at Bosworth

The deal with Brittany took effect on 1 July and was to last until April 1485 – the entire plot for England to gain possession of Henry and Jasper Tudor had reached fruition. Richard sent letters announcing his intention to invade France and offered to send at least 1,000 archers from Southampton to Brittany. Although King Richard's promised troops never arrived in Brittany, his interference in Anglo-Breton affairs had offended the French government.

In the late summer and early autumn, there is evidence Henry made an offer of alms at Vannes Cathedral. Accounts also mention the appearance of Sir James Tyrell, master of the horse for King Richard, who also gave alms. Just as the plot to capture Henry neared completion, someone warned him of the trap: John Morton, Bishop of Ely, who was living in exile in Flanders. Margaret Beaufort's chaplain and confessor Christopher Urswick acted as her agent and had travelled to Flanders. It remains unknown how Morton discovered the plot to capture Henry; however, he sent Urswick to Vannes to warn Henry and the other noblemen to leave Brittany for France with all speed.

Henry sent Urswick to the court of King Charles VIII to ask permission for asylum in France. Charles agreed. Urswick returned to Vannes, and Henry and

BELOW Henry's victory at Bosworth Field marked the end of the Plantagenet dynasty



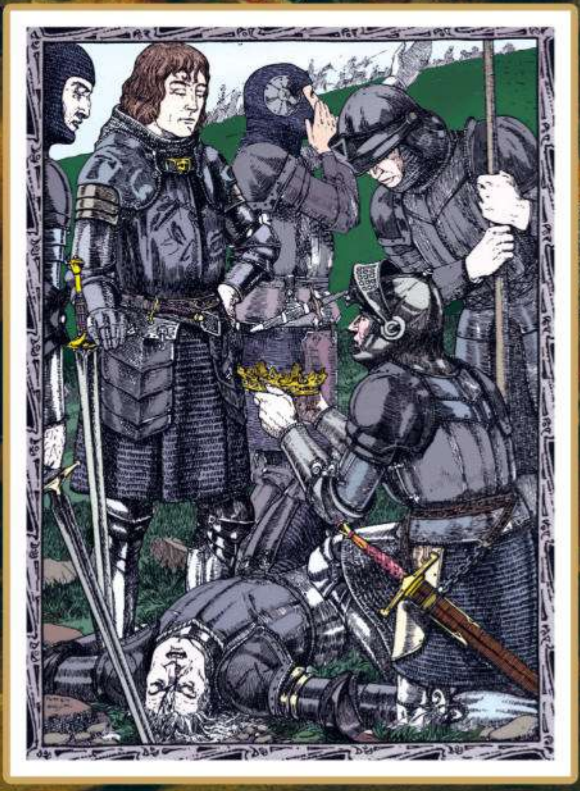
Jasper began planning their escape. First, Jasper and a few men departed, giving the impression they were going to Duke Francis at Rennes, a city near the French frontier. They made a run for the border and headed for Anjou.

Two days later, Henry left the city with five servants, telling everyone he planned to visit a friend at a neighbouring manor house. About 8km outside the city, he made a detour towards a nearby forest. With the help of his servant Matthew Baker, he changed his clothes, dressing like a common servant, and then rode straight across the border to Angers in Anjou, only stopping to let their horses drink.

Landais, informed that Henry had gotten away, hurriedly dispatched some of his trusted servants in all directions to find, arrest and bring him back to Brittany. Once Landais' men got to the French border, they discovered Henry had crossed into Anjou only about an hour before they arrived. The 400 Englishmen remaining in Vannes knew nothing of Henry's escape, but when they heard of it, they became frightened. About the same time, Duke Francis recovered his senses. To his astonishment, he heard for the first time the news of his chancellor's treacherous scheme.

Duke Francis considered himself an honourable man. From the beginning, he had openly shown his support for the exiles and had no intention of stopping now. Furious with Landais, Francis turned him over to the Breton nobles

> **"KING EDWARD, WEARY OF THE CIVIL STRIFE, ULTIMATELY RECOGNISED THE BENEFIT OF BRINGING HENRY TUDOR INTO THE YORKIST CAMP"**



BELOW-INSET Henry VII is handed the crown of England following Richard III's death

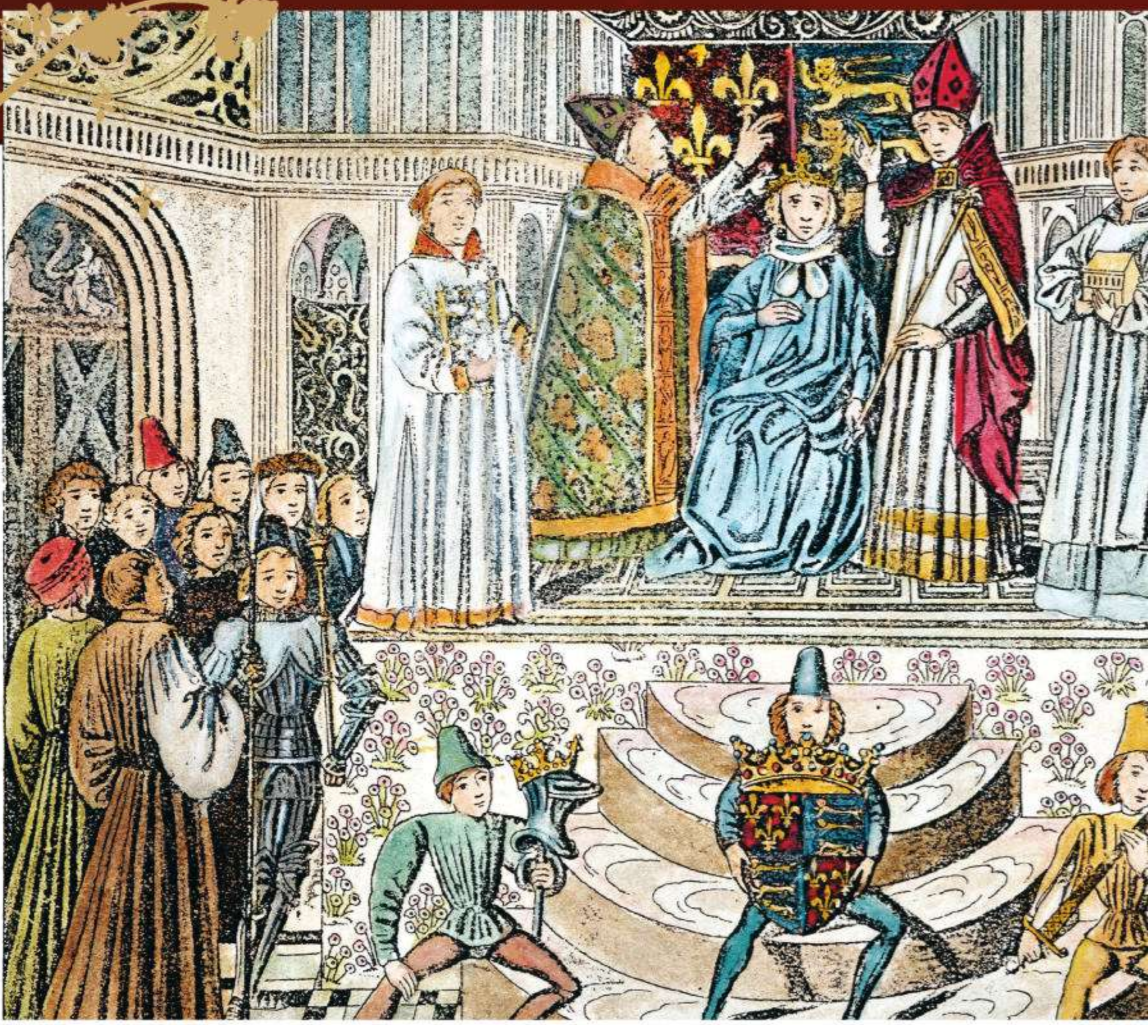
All images: © Alamy, © Getty Images

THE BATTLE OVER BRITTANY

The duchy existed as an independent domain from ancient times until the 16th century

The history of Brittany on the Armorican peninsula of what is now France has its origins in prehistoric times. Before Roman rule, ancient megalith cultures and Celtic tribes inhabited the area. The Romans under Julius Caesar conquered Brittany in 56 BCE, and after years of quelling resistance a kind of renaissance occurred during the reign of Emperor Constantine (306-337 CE). Historians believe the fourth century saw the Christianisation of the area, and following the collapse of the Roman Empire migrants from Cornwall, Devon and Wales arrived. Various independent smaller Breton states later developed into the Kingdom and then the Duchy of Brittany.

The Bretons would resist being absorbed into the Carolingian Empire and the families of Montfort and Penthièvre fought the now legendary War of Breton Succession between 1341-64. In 1378, King Charles V of France attempted to annex Brittany, but the people resisted. The last independent duke of Brittany, Francis II, reigned from 1458 until his death in 1488. Francis harboured the Tudor exiles for many years, and upon the duke's death his 11-year-old daughter Anne became Duchess of Brittany. She married two successive French kings, Charles VIII and Louis XII, and had two coronations as Queen of France. During King Francis I's reign, Brittany lost its complete autonomy and become a French province in 1532.



ABOVE The official coronation of Henry VII following his victory over Richard III

who backed the regent, Anne de Beaujeu. Arrested and accused of extortion, along with other crimes, they executed Landais on 19 July.

Duke Francis gave the remaining Englishmen money and offered them free passage to France. Henry sent a sincere message of thanks to the duke for his support. Henry then met up with Jasper and his men at the Chateau d'Angers, while Urswick travelled to Montargis to inform the French king the English had arrived. A delighted Charles sent Gilbert de Chabannes, Lord of Curzon and governor of the province of Limousin, to greet and welcome the English.

Henry met King Charles at Chartres a few days later and threw himself upon his mercy. He began his campaign to convince the French king he was the rightful claimant to the English throne, telling Charles his nobility called for his return to the kingdom. While not giving his complete endorsement, Charles expressed his support of Henry's mission to claim the throne. He agreed to provide lodgings for all the exiles in Sens and gave him 3,000 livres tournois to buy clothing for his men.

Naturally, this unanticipated escape had been a complete catastrophe for King Richard, and relations between France and England deteriorated even further. Richard issued proclamations against Henry and the exiles and ordered the muster of men. England, now on high alert, prepared to fight off an assault.

THE ROAD TO BOSWORTH

It would take a year before the French regime agreed to back Henry's invasion of England. The Estates-General of France, at the request of King Charles, granted Henry 40,000 livres to aid in the recovery of his kingdom, and Charles gave him permission to recruit men to raise an army. In truth, Henry only received about 10,000 of the 40,000 livres promised to him and had to resort to getting a loan from one of Charles' councillors, allowing the preparations to begin in earnest. This entailed the amassing of a convoy on the River Seine along with all necessary naval and military arrangements.

> "DESPITE BEING OUTNUMBERED BY RICHARD'S ARMY, THE BATTLE TURNED INTO A VICTORY FOR HENRY WHEN RICHARD WAS KILLED IN THE FRAY"

TUDOR TIMELINE

A brief history of Henry VII

1457

Henry Tudor is born to Margaret Beaufort and Edmund Tudor at Pembroke Castle.

1462

Lord Herbert, an ally of Edward IV, takes Henry as his ward.

1469

Lord Herbert is defeated at the Battle of Edgcote and executed by the Lancastrians.

1471

Henry is the last of the Lancastrian line following their defeat at Tewkesbury, forcing him into exile.

1485

Henry returns and defeats Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth Field, taking the throne of England.

1486

Henry VII and Elizabeth of York are married, uniting the houses of York and Lancaster, followed by the birth of Arthur Tudor.

1487

The Battle of Stoke sees the rebellious Earl of Lincoln and Lambert Simnel defeated by Henry VII.

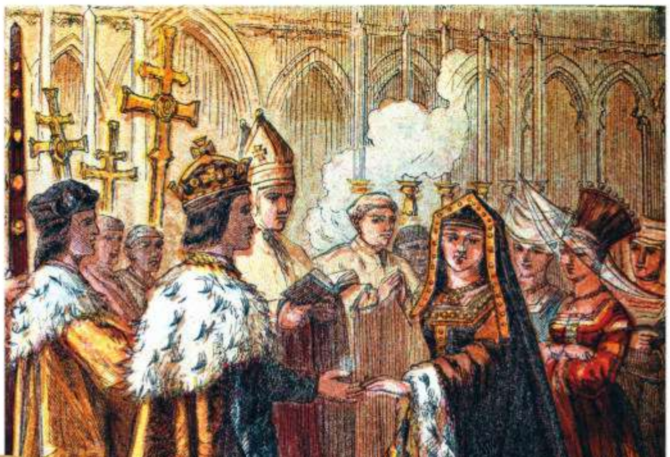
1489

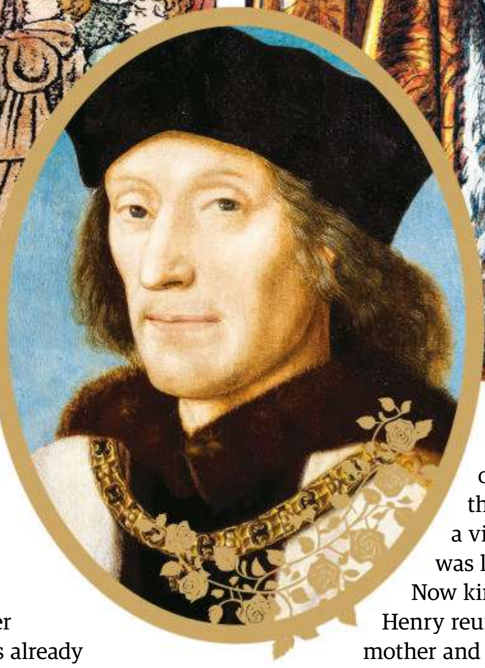
Margaret Tudor, Henry and Elizabeth's second child, is born.

1491

Henry Tudor, the third royal child and future Henry VIII, is born.

Coat of arms image source: wiki/Rs-nourse/CC BY-SA 3.0
All images: © Alamy, © Getty Images





Henry began his campaign in November 1484 by sending letters to England to gain support, writing these letters in a manner suggesting he was already king. In response, Richard issued proclamations against Henry, ridiculing his pretensions to the royal estate. Henry received good tidings from a servant of his mother of support in England by various nobles and the pledge of funds for his cause to be delivered to him once he arrived in Wales. By now, he had gathered a band of 500 Englishmen, 1,000 Scots as well as some footmen and an unknown number of French troops at Harfleur. It is believed the French troops amounted to about half of the entire invasion army.

Henry's fleet of about 30 ships sailed on 1 August 1485, bound for Wales to claim the English crown. They landed at Milford Haven on 8 August and began moving north-east to engage Richard, recruiting and welcoming men to Henry's cause as he marched. Many Welshmen joined him and his progress was largely unimpeded.

They arrived near Richard's troops bordering on Bosworth Field in Leicestershire, where the fight began on 22 August. Despite being outnumbered, the battle turned into a victory when Richard was killed in the fray.

Now king of England, Henry reunited with his mother and married Elizabeth of York, unifying the houses of Lancaster and York. The newly founded Tudor dynasty would rule England from 1485 until the death of Elizabeth I in 1603.

ABOVE Henry's marriage to Elizabeth of York united the country

LEFT Portrait of King Henry VII of England, the first monarch of the Tudor dynasty, by an unknown Flemish painter, c.1505

FURTHER READING

SUBSCRIBER EXCLUSIVE

Read more about the Tudors in issue 151 via our digital archive

SCAN HERE

ALL ABOUT HISTORY
ANNE OF CLEVES

1492

Peace achieved between France and England with the Treaty of Étaples.

1496

A fourth child, Mary Tudor, is born to the king and queen.

1499

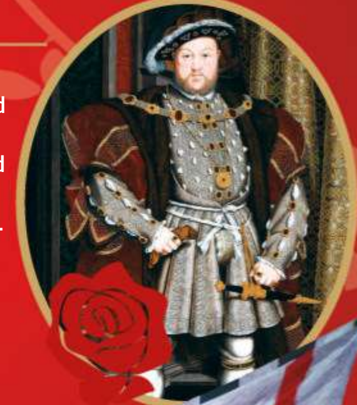
Edmund Tudor, a fifth royal child, is born, but dies the following year.

1501

Arthur is married to Katherine of Aragon, but dies suddenly the next year.

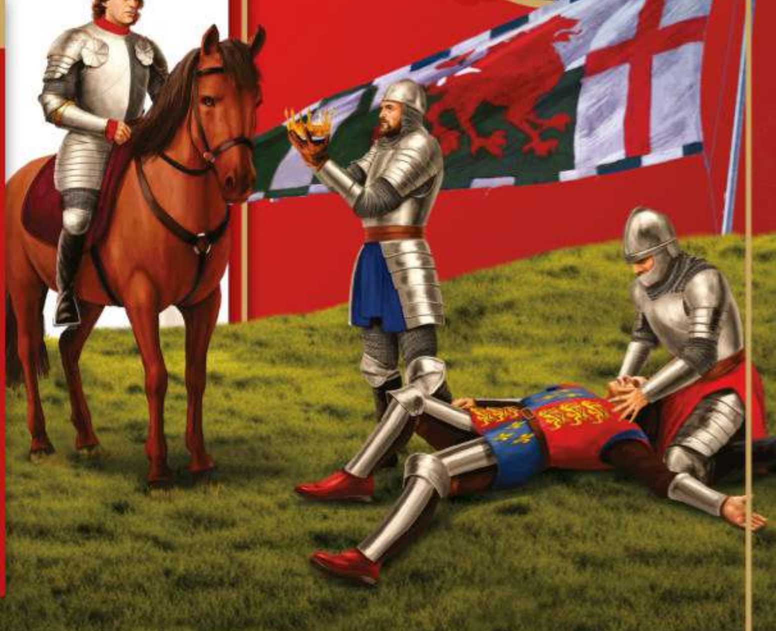
1503

Elizabeth gives birth to a sixth child, Katherine Tudor, but both child and mother die shortly after.



1509

Henry VII of England dies, succeeded by his son Henry VIII.



© Adobe Stock/AI generated

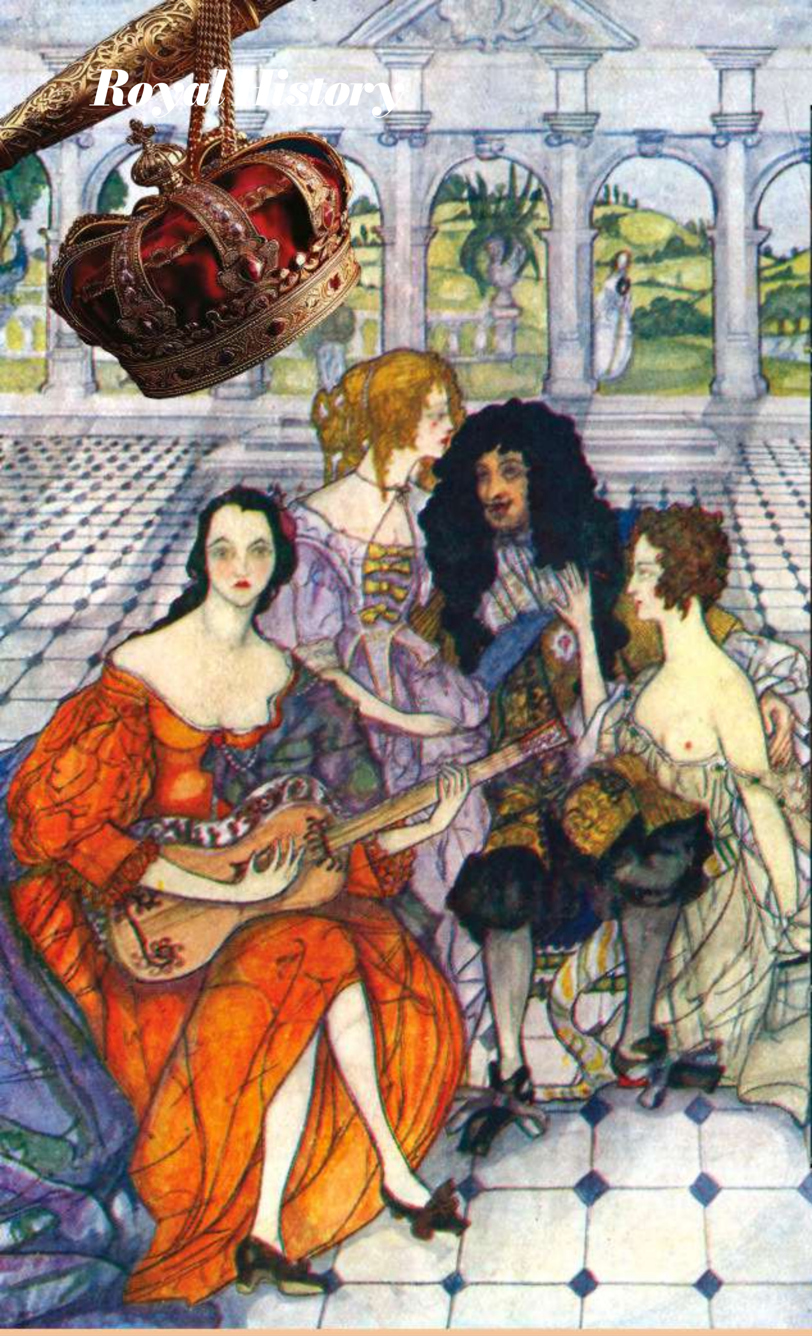
British Royal BASTARDS

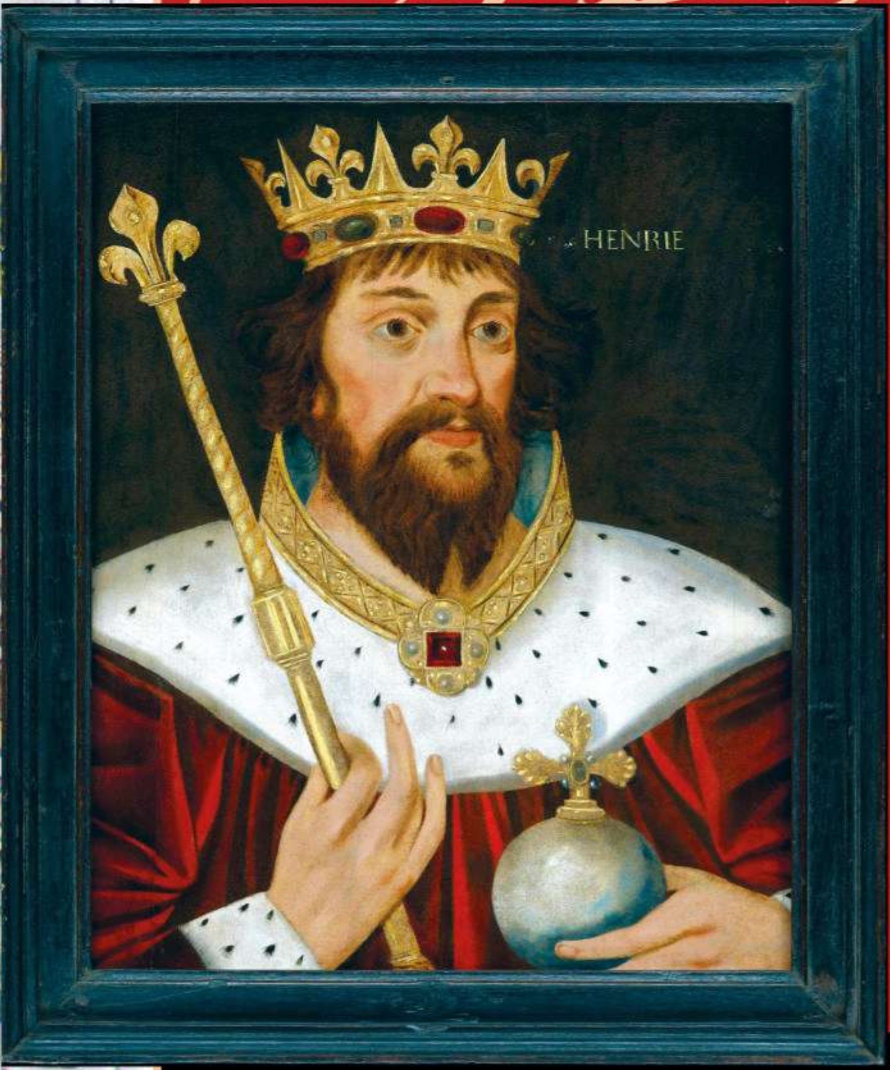
Discover the politics, prevalence and prominence of Britain's royal illegitimate children from the Norman Conquest to today

Written by Emily Staniforth

With a hereditary monarchy in Britain, the kings and queens of the United Kingdom have all tended to be preoccupied by one thing - having children. Marriages were judged by how quickly a royal couple became pregnant, and courtiers waited with bated breath to discover the gender of the monarch's children. Royal wives were shamed for their inability to conceive or birth a living child. And while the creation and survival of legitimate royal children was a matter of interest for the public, so too was the fate of children who were born out of royal wedlock.

Many of Britain's kings have fathered illegitimate children. In fact, it would be more pertinent to ask which of England's historical kings did not have at least one child outside of their marriage. While there is no evidence that William the Conqueror (r.1066-87) or his son William II (r.1087 - 1100) had any children outside of their marriages, the majority of kings who came after them certainly did. Henry I (r.1100-35), England's third king after the Norman Conquest, was the proud father of around 25 illegitimate children, making him the monarch with the most children born outside of wedlock. Charles II (r.1660-85) had at least 14 illegitimate offspring with a number of different women, and William IV (r.1830-37) fathered 10 children with his mistress of many years, Irish actress Dorothea Jordan.





ABOVE-LEFT Charles II was notorious for his many public affairs with a number of mistresses

ABOVE-RIGHT Henry I fathered at least 25 illegitimate children, the most of any British royal

Wandering spouses

So why were Britain's kings straying from their wives and why were illegitimate royal children so commonplace? For centuries, the business of finding a wife as the king of England was more a matter of politics than of romantic love. Alliances with other nations or strengthening relationships with Britain's most prominent families took precedence, and brides were often selected from small pools of potential candidates drawn up by advisors and politicians. As such, many royal marriages were unhappy ones: Charles II in particular was noted for how much he appeared to dislike his wife Catherine of Braganza, and Edward II (r.1307-27) was deposed thanks to the efforts of his wife Isabella of France to remove him from the throne. And let's not even get started on Henry VIII (r.1509-47) and his conveyor belt of wives!

As a result of these strained marriages, it was not unusual for kings to engage in extramarital relationships. In fact, it was almost expected that a king would have mistresses. Those who did remain faithful to their wives are unusual in England's royal history and stand as anomalies; there is no proven evidence that either William the Conqueror or Henry VII (r.1485 – 1509) took mistresses and they were known to be completely devoted to their wives. But taking a mistress did not always signify an unhappy marriage. At the royal court, marriage was a solemn business that served a purpose, namely producing an heir to the throne. For many kings, marriage was a matter of duty while a mistress provided fun, sex and friendship.

Being a royal mistress

The taking of a mistress (or in some cases several) became such an established practice of kingship that it is not surprising that many royal wives simply accepted their husband's affairs as a part of their marriage. Some kings were discreet in their affairs, and in these circumstances it was possible for queens to ignore what their husbands were doing behind closed doors. However, some of England's kings conducted their extramarital relationships for all to see, appearing in public with their chosen mistresses and showering them with luxuries. Mistresses were often rewarded for their proximity to the king: their families were elevated at court and they were given extravagant gifts, and having the ear of the king gave them enhanced political power in a patriarchal society. This meant being the king's mistress was sometimes viewed as a coveted role. Charles II was notoriously indiscreet about his many extramarital partners, in particular with Barbara Villiers, who was sometimes referred to as England's 'Uncrowned Queen' due to her influence at court. Though royal wives may have objected, there was nothing they could really do. Being married to England's most powerful man had its advantages, but also its downside.

Acknowledging bastard children

Of course, the many affairs of England's kings led to lots of children. Birth control was either non-existent or primitive and engaging in any antics in the royal bedchamber always carried

All images: © Alamy, © Getty Images

the risk of pregnancy. But as mistresses were an accepted part of a royal marriage, illegitimate children were not as troublesome as might be expected. For many monarchs, having children signified their virility and prowess to the rest of the world. The more offspring sired, the stronger and more fertile the king. When royal children were born to their mistresses, many kings of the medieval and early modern periods decided to publicly acknowledge them.

One of the most infamous illegitimate royal children in Britain's history is Henry Fitzroy, the son of Tudor tyrant Henry VIII. Born in 1519 to Henry's mistress Elizabeth Blount, Fitzroy was the only illegitimate child Henry formally acknowledged during the king's lifetime. At the time of Fitzroy's birth, Henry had been married to his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, for ten years, during which Queen Catherine had only been able to give birth to one living child, their daughter Mary. Concerned with the line of succession, Henry had become increasingly frustrated by his lack of a son and heir. The birth of Henry Fitzroy provided the perfect opportunity to declare to the world that he could father a boy. By publicly acknowledging his son, Henry salvaged his public image, proved he could fulfil his duty to provide an heir, and lay the blame for his lack of a royal heir at the door or his wife. While it was technically illegal for an illegitimate child to inherit the throne, many historians believe that Henry was positioning Fitzroy to be his heir if he did not manage to have a legitimate son. At one point, it was even suggested that Fitzroy be married to Henry's daughter Mary as a way to ensure a Tudor succession but, luckily, this plan never came to fruition. Fitzroy died in 1536 at just 17 years old, and a year later Henry VIII's son Edward was born to his third wife Jane Seymour.

> "William the conqueror was, himself, an illegitimate child"

A king laying claim to his illegitimate children also served another purpose. There are no closer ties than those of family, and populating your court with your own offspring was a way to ensure loyalty and support. Henry I quickly realised that his many children were excellent pawns in foreign diplomacy and started arranging marriages between them and the powerful noble families of Europe. Through his matchmaking, Henry's illegitimate daughter Sybilla ended up becoming the queen of Scotland through her marriage to Alexander I.

The benefits of being a bastard

Being a recognised illegitimate child of a British monarch offered certain advantages. As a known family member of the king, your status was elevated, and once you had been formally recognised it was usual to be provided for by the monarch. Titles were granted to both legitimate and illegitimate children alike by many kings, with some illegitimate royal children becoming powerful figures in English society. Dukedoms and earldoms were commonly given to illegitimate sons, and these titles were often accompanied by gifts of land. For example, John of Gloucester, the only recognised illegitimate son of Richard III (r.1483-85), was given the prominent status of Captain of Calais by his father in 1485. Illegitimate daughters were more likely to be married to English or foreign noblemen than given titles of their own, but these marriages often came with titles attached. Joan, the daughter of King John (r.1199 - 1216), became Lady of Wales through her marriage to Llywelyn the Great, and at least two of Charles II's illegitimate daughters became countesses when they married earls.

Some illegitimate children devoted themselves to the Church, a traditional path taken by many children of monarchs who were not destined for the throne. Geoffrey, the son of Henry II (r.1154-89), was steered towards a religious life by his father and was sent to school before taking holy orders as a teenager. He later became the Archbishop of York, one of the most coveted positions in the Catholic Church in England. The illegitimate son of King Stephen (r.1135-54), Gervase of Blois, became the Abbot of Westminster, a position to which he was appointed by his father despite being much younger and less experienced than others who had occupied the role.

Though illegitimate children were often given titles, there was one huge drawback to being born to a mistress - illegitimate children were not allowed to inherit the throne. For monarchs like Henry I, this must have been a kick in the teeth. With at least 27 recognised children (two legitimate and 25 illegitimate), his throne should have been secure and guaranteed to pass down his family line. However, after the death of his one legitimate son, his daughter Matilda had

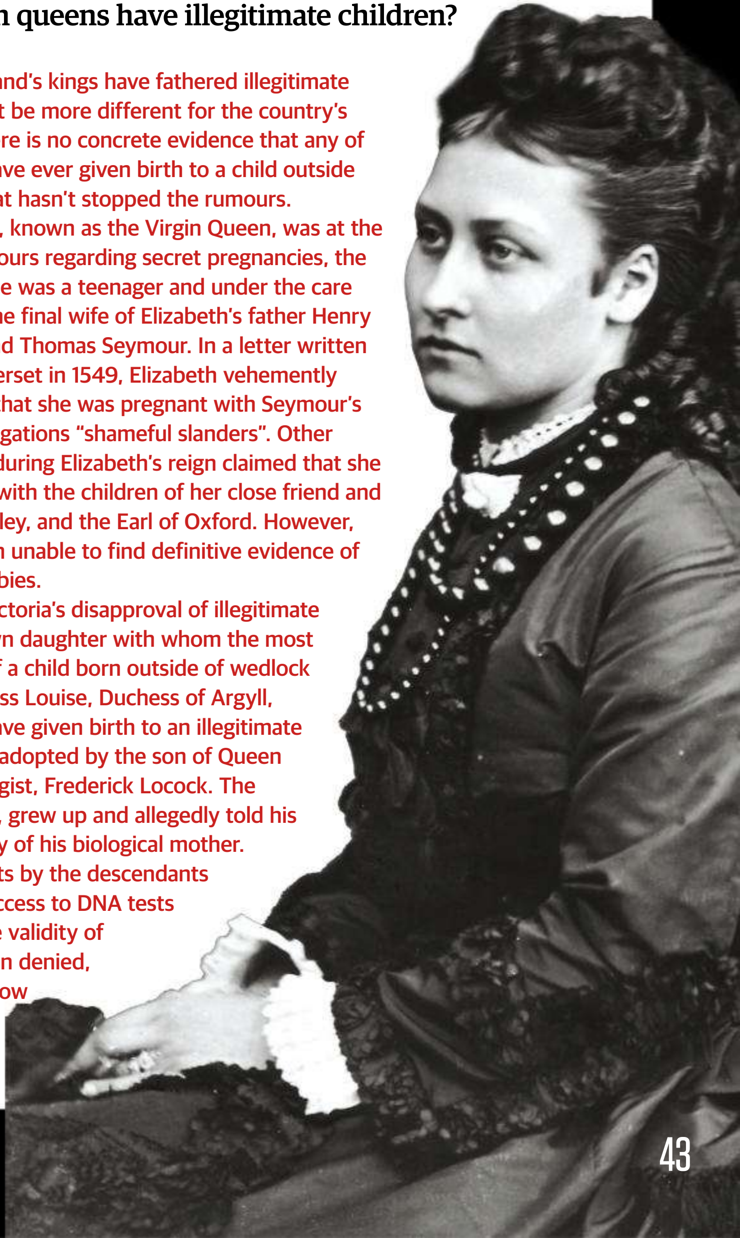
VIRTUOUS QUEENS

Did any English queens have illegitimate children?

While many of England's kings have fathered illegitimate children, it could not be more different for the country's historic queens. There is no concrete evidence that any of England's queens have ever given birth to a child outside of wedlock… but that hasn't stopped the rumours.

Queen Elizabeth I, known as the Virgin Queen, was at the centre of many rumours regarding secret pregnancies, the first arising when she was a teenager and under the care of Katherine Parr (the final wife of Elizabeth's father Henry VIII) and her husband Thomas Seymour. In a letter written to the Duke of Somerset in 1549, Elizabeth vehemently denied the rumour that she was pregnant with Seymour's child, calling the allegations "shameful slanders". Other rumours circulated during Elizabeth's reign claimed that she had been pregnant with the children of her close friend and advisor, Robert Dudley, and the Earl of Oxford. However, historians have been unable to find definitive evidence of any secret Tudor babies.

Despite Queen Victoria's disapproval of illegitimate children, it is her own daughter with whom the most pervasive rumour of a child born outside of wedlock is associated. Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll, was purported to have given birth to an illegitimate child who was then adopted by the son of Queen Victoria's gynaecologist, Frederick Locock. The baby, Henry Locock, grew up and allegedly told his family of the identity of his biological mother. Subsequent attempts by the descendants of Locock to have access to DNA tests that could prove the validity of their claim have been denied, so we may never know if the extraordinary story is true.



BELOW
Rumours of a secret illegitimate child surrounded Queen Victoria's daughter Princess Louise

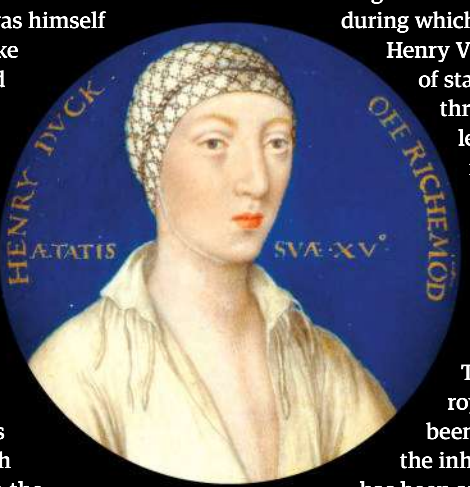
BELOW-LEFT Henry Fitzroy was the only recognised illegitimate child of Henry VIII

BELOW Catherine Carey was believed to have been the daughter of Henry VIII, though he never confirmed this or acknowledged her

to fight her cousin Stephen for the throne. The relationship between Matilda and one of her half-brothers was invaluable during this time, with Robert, Earl of Gloucester (possibly the oldest of all Henry I's illegitimate offspring), being her strongest supporter. Unfortunately, Matilda never inherited the crown.

Despite illegitimacy being a barrier to the monarchy, illegitimate children have sat on England's throne. The most notable was William the Conqueror, who was himself an illegitimate child. He was the son of Duke Robert I of Normandy and a woman named Herleve, who may have been a lowly tanner's daughter. Although his parents were unmarried, William was named as his father's heir. This, however, did little to stop his contemporaries from referring to him as William the Bastard.

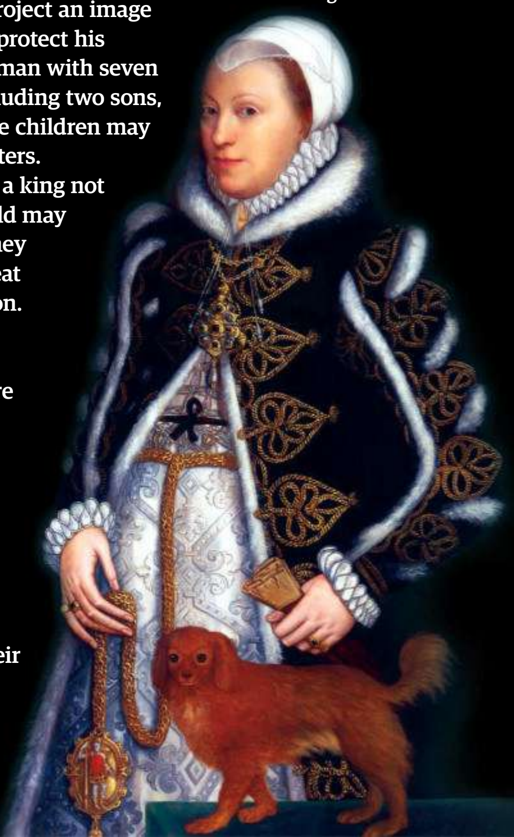
It is also important to remember that throughout its history, British society derived its moral and ethical values through the Church, which prized the sanctity of marriage and frowned upon children born outside of wedlock. As such, being an illegitimate child came with a certain amount of stigma attached. Even the illegitimate children of kings were viewed differently to their legitimate peers, despite the favour they were often shown by the monarch.



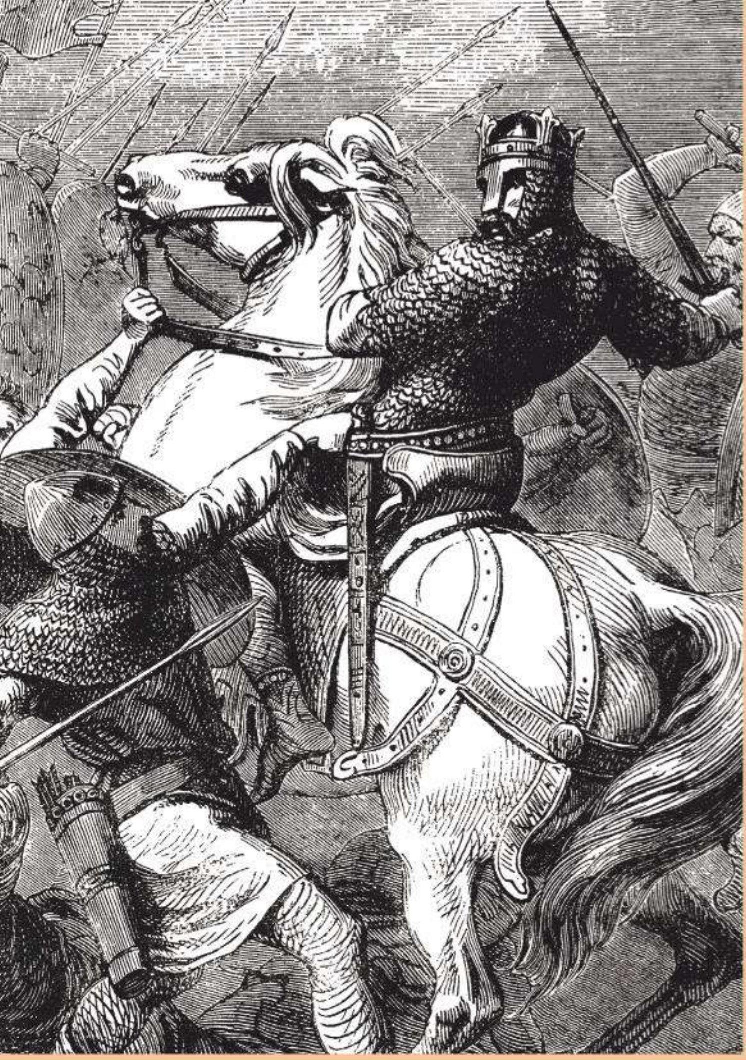
Simmering threats

Though many of the illegitimate children of British royals were recognised by their respective fathers, some never were. In the case of Edward IV (r.1461-83), there is evidence that he only acknowledged one of the many illegitimate children he may have fathered. This may have simply been because he did not believe he was the father of other rumoured children, but it also could have been linked to the fact that Edward occupied the English throne at a tumultuous time. Throughout his reign, and afterwards, England was in the middle of a bitter civil war fought between the houses of York and Lancaster, during which Edward had taken the throne from Henry VI. Edward needed to project an image of stability to his people to protect his throne, and as a married man with seven legitimate children, including two sons, recognising illegitimate children may have muddied the waters.

Another reason for a king not to acknowledge a child may have been because they were viewed as a threat to the line of succession. Throughout England's royal history, there have been many occasions where the inheritance of the Crown has been anything but smooth, with civil wars fought and family members at odds. There have also been several purported claimants to the English throne who have been used as figureheads for rebellion against the Crown. Illegitimate children, who did not legally have a right to inherit but may have believed strongly in their moral rights, could be troublesome.



All images: © Alamy, © Getty Images



THE FITZ FAMILY NAME

Why were so many illegitimate royal children given a similar surname?

ASHBERRY COTTAGE
Here lived
WILLIAM,
DUKE OF CLARENCE
later
KING WILLIAM IV
and
Mrs DOROTHEA
JORDAN
Actress

When looking through the identities of the known illegitimate children of British kings, it quickly becomes apparent that many of them share the same or similar surnames. Fitzroy is one of the most commonly occurring names of illegitimate children in royal British history. Anglo-Norman in origin, the translation of the name makes sense when attributed to illegitimate royals: 'Fitz' means 'son of' and 'roy' means 'king'. Thus, Fitzroy literally translates as 'the son of the king'. By giving their illegitimate offspring this name, royal children could be identified and validated in public.

Variations of Fitzroy also feature heavily in the list of illegitimate royal children. Though many of Charles II's children were given the surname Fitzroy, one of his sons was named Fitzcharles, meaning 'son of Charles'. Similarly, the illegitimate children of James II were assigned the surname Fitzjames. Finally, all the children of William IV and his mistress Dorothea Jordan were named FitzClarence, reflecting the title of Duke of Clarence, which was held by their father prior to him becoming king.

It is important to note that the use of a 'Fitz' name was not limited to just illegitimate sons. Many illegitimate royal daughters were also given a surname starting with 'Fitz'.

ABOVE-LEFT During the reign of Queen Victoria, who had nine legitimate children, the existence of illegitimate children became an increasingly shameful subject

ABOVE Empress Matilda's illegitimate brother, Robert of Gloucester, was instrumental in her fight for the Crown and even arrested King Stephen

James Scott, 1st Duke of Monmouth, caused such a problem in 1685 when he laid claim to the English throne and attempted to challenge the rule of his uncle James II (r.1685-88). Monmouth was the illegitimate son of Charles II and his mistress Lucy Walter and had been a favourite of his father. He was an impressive military leader and was elevated by Charles to the position of captain general of all of England's armies. This was clearly not enough for Monmouth, as he was later implicated in the Rye House Plot of 1683, which planned to assassinate both Charles II and his brother. Many contemporaries considered Monmouth to be a potential heir to his father, given Charles' lack of legitimate offspring, but his involvement in the plot likely put a stop to that. Sadly for Monmouth, it was Charles' brother James who took the Crown. With backing from Protestant supporters who opposed the rule of another Catholic king (James II had converted to Catholicism in 1669), Monmouth led a rebellion against the new monarch. However, his forces were quickly defeated by James and Monmouth was arrested, found guilty of treason and beheaded at the Tower of London.

Continuing bloodlines

During the Victorian era, social stigma surrounding illegitimate children increased across all levels of society. Queen Victoria (r.1837 – 1901) referred to her illegitimate cousins as "ghosts best forgotten", and during her 63-year reign the general acceptance of illegitimate royals appeared to subside. By the time her son, Edward VII (r.1901-10), became king, illegitimate children had become a subject of shame and ridicule. As such, Edward VII never acknowledged any of his rumoured illegitimate offspring despite engaging in a number of extramarital affairs. Since the reign of Victoria, no British monarch has admitted to having a child outside of their marriage.

> "Since the reign of Victoria, no British monarch has admitted to having a child outside of their marriage."

Though the existence of potential illegitimate royal children remains shrouded in secrecy to this day, rumours continue to circulate. In recent years, an Australian man who believes he is the son of King Charles III and Queen Camilla has been making headlines around the world. His claims have been strenuously denied by the king and queen. Other speculation sometimes appears in the media questioning whether Prince Harry really is the king's son, an accusation that the royal family strongly refutes. Just as Tudor courtiers speculated that Henry VIII may have been the true father of siblings Catherine and Henry Carey, the children of Henry's known mistress Mary Boleyn, many continue to make suppositions about the legitimacy of the royal family to this day.

Maybe we have always been fascinated by the mysteries of the royal family, an establishment that guards many secrets while operating in public view, precisely because they have so often refused to address such rumours. But regardless of why the topic of illegitimate children has, and remains to be, so intriguing, it is true that the descendants of royal bastards still populate the upper classes of British society: Queen Camilla; Diana, Princess of Wales; and Sarah, Duchess of York (the ex-wife of Prince Andrew) are all descended from illegitimate children of Charles II and Louise de Kérouaille, and former British Prime Minister David Cameron traces his lineage back to an illegitimate child of William IV. Without the existence of illegitimate royal offspring, Britain's political and royal landscape may have looked very different.

EXPERT BIO

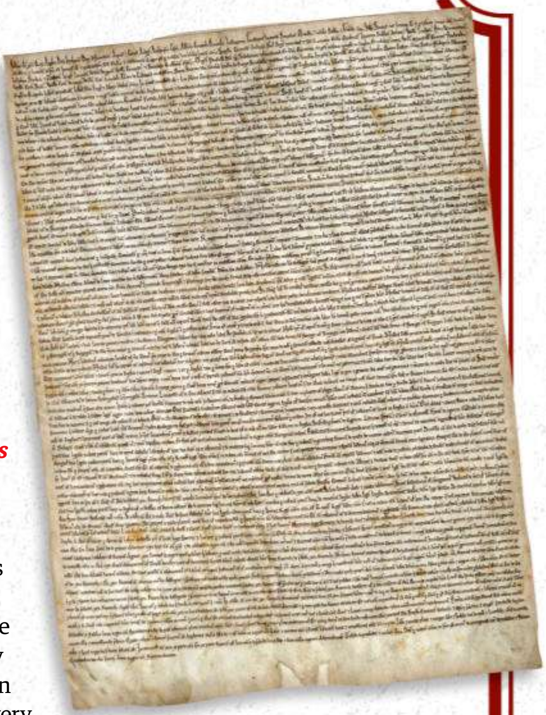
© Peter Clark, 2023

DAN JONES
Dan is the author of many non-fiction books, including *The Plantagenets*, *The Templars* and *Powers and Thrones*. He has presented dozens of TV shows, including the Netflix series *Secrets of Great British Castles*, and writes and hosts the podcast *This is History*. He is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society.

"HENRY V WAS THE PERFECT MEDIEVAL KING"

Historian Dan Jones discusses the kingship of Henry V and his own passion for medieval history

Interview by Emily Staniforth



Renowned historian and broadcaster Dan Jones has become one of history's most recognisable faces. Having written and presented documentaries on a variety of topics from the Middle Ages, his newest book sees him delve into the life of one of England's greatest medieval kings, Henry V. We sat down with Dan to talk all things Henry V, as well as discussing his love for medieval history and his hugely successful career.

Where did your passion for medieval history begin?

I had a great teacher at school and that's a story I know will be either familiar or enviable to readers. I think history is a subject that's highly dependent on good teachers and I had a good teacher called Robin Green when I was about 16 years old. We studied Tudors and Nazis at school on repeat, and when I was going to Cambridge in the autumn of 1999 I asked Mr Green what I should study that's not the Tudors and Nazis. He said: "I don't know, medieval?" So I checked the box that said medieval and, nearly 25 years ago to the day, I arrived as an undergraduate at Pembroke College and was sent off to my first ever supervision with Helen Castor, who taught me for two papers of my first year. She was a really inspirational teacher and gave me the bug for medieval history.

Were there any particular medieval topics that first caught your attention at university?

The very first essay Helen set me was: "What was at issue between King John and the barons?" So Magna Carta was the first thing we studied and studying Magna Carta is a real crash course in early Plantagenet history because it's not enough just to understand the reign of King John. You've got to get to grips with everything from Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine to Richard the Lionheart: that whole first family unit. I didn't imagine that a quarter-of-a-century later I'd still be coming back to Magna Carta but I have. I've written a book about Magna Carta and I've written a book about the Plantagenets. On the podcast that I do (*This is History*) we've spent a whole season on John. So I think that first topic really got me into Plantagenet history and I'm still here!

As a successful writer, broadcaster and podcaster, how does the research process differ between mediums?

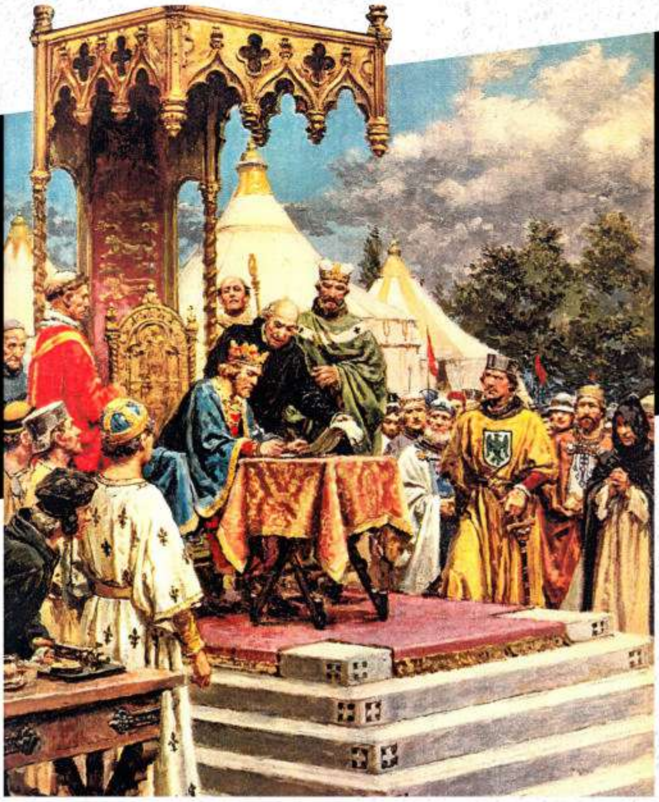
Certainly for television and podcasting in the form that I'm doing it, research is very targeted because you have fixed structures that underpin television documentaries and, to an extent, narrative podcasts. You're limited for time and you have to tell a very linear story to keep the audience's attention so the research for something like that is very targeted to fit into a structural shape. You know that you need dramatic protagonists and antagonists, certainly for the stuff I've made which is very character driven. Research is guided by the form of the medium. That's less true for books, where research is a broader dredging operation. You're reading your way into a topic and trying to absorb as much as possible, and then it's a process of digestion and working out the shape of construction there. There's a great deal more original source research for books than there is for television and podcasts and, in my experience, you want to have a generally deeper immersion and a longer research process. For my book on Henry V, I've worked for three years on this book alone and I've been working with this material for 20 years. It's a deeper and richer form of research. And then I write historical novels as well, which is another form of research. ▶

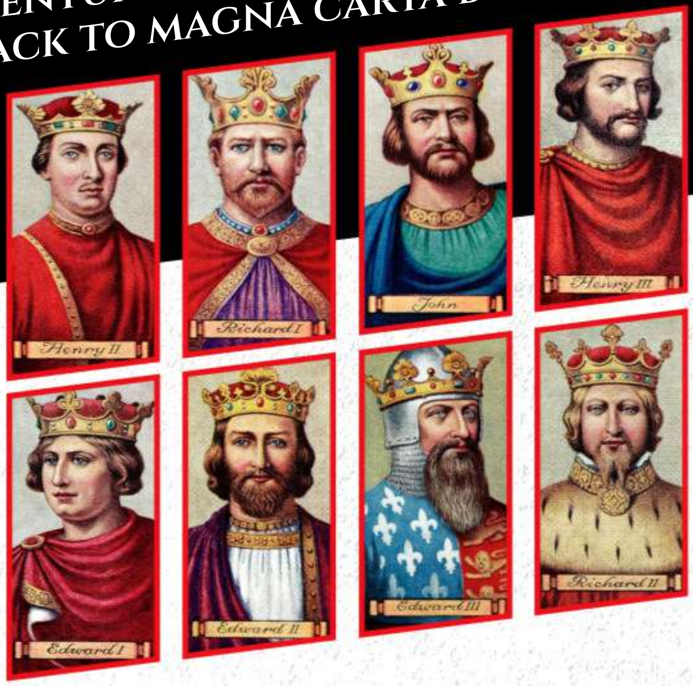
ABOVE Magna Carta was one of the first topics that ignited Jones' interest in medieval history

BELOW LEFT King John approved the Magna Carta in 1215

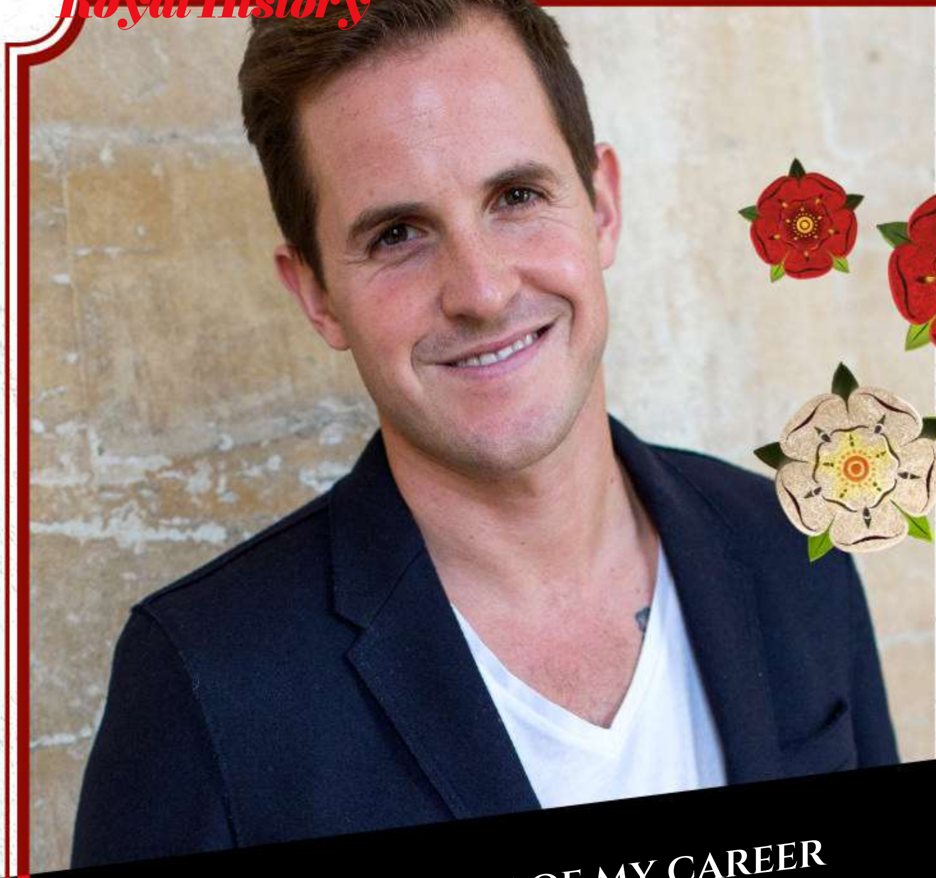
BELOW The Plantagenet Kings (1154 – 1399)

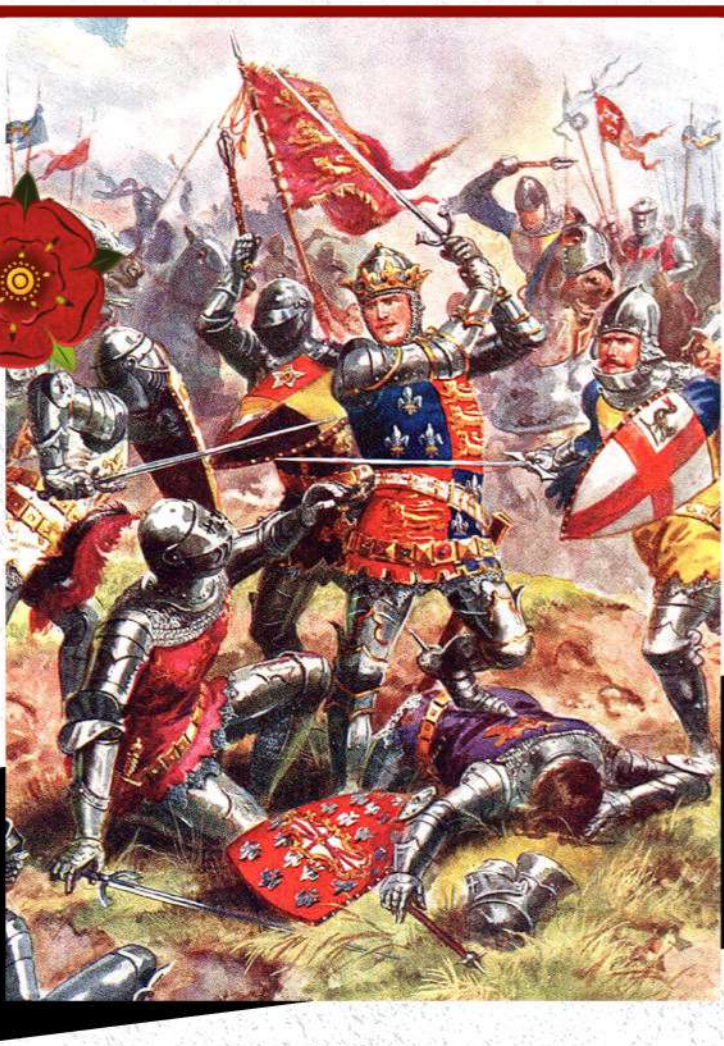
"I DIDN'T IMAGINE THAT A QUARTER-OF-A-CENTURY LATER I'D STILL BE COMING BACK TO MAGNA CARTA BUT I HAVE"





Images: © Getty Images, © Alamy





"OVER THE COURSE OF MY CAREER I'VE ENJOYED HAVING THE OPPORTUNITY TO 'DO HISTORY' ACROSS A RANGE OF MEDIA"

ABOVE LEFT Dan says he was bitten by the history bug as a teenager

ABOVE Henry V is most famous for his victory at the Battle of Agincourt in 1415

ABOVE RIGHT Some historians suggest that the struggle for Henry's successors to maintain his success in France contributed to the Wars of the Roses (1455-85)

ABOVE INSET As a young man, Henry VIII looked to Henry V as an inspiration

Is there one form of history that you enjoy doing more than others?

Over the course of my career I've enjoyed having the opportunity to 'do history' across a range of media. That's one of the things I enjoy the most because I get bored easily. I like variety and so I really enjoy the deep dive of a long book. *Powers and Thrones*, which is my history of the Middle Ages, was a quarter-of-a-million words written fairly intensively during lockdown. I love that long immersion in a really big and complex project. But I also like the quick reward that I get from writing a blog post or a newspaper article and I enjoy that type of communication as well. I like audio work and screen work. It's having a variety of ways to communicate that I enjoy the most.

How important do you think it is that history is accessible on different media platforms?

For me it's not a question of it being important, it's an opportunity. We're living through an extraordinary revolution in communications and communications technology and it would be insane not to take advantage of the opportunities that brings. There are a lot of younger historians using TikTok, Instagram and social media to create tiny little micro films that are incredibly popular and a great way of communicating. I think it's great that historians are seeing the opportunities within this new media landscape and embracing them. I'm immensely gratified and glad about the fact that books are still thriving too. I think that because history is complex, many histories can't be satisfactorily dealt with at any length shorter than a substantial nonfiction book, so I'm really glad that amid this technological revolution that books are still popular. But it's great that historians have seen this changing, expanding, diversified media landscape and collectively have decided to embrace it.

Your new book Henry V: The Astonishing Rise of England's Greatest Warrior King has just been published. Why did you feel that Henry V needed his own biography?

It was less about Henry V's needs than my own! I wanted to write a biography of Henry V for a very long time. I'd written *The Plantagenets* back in 2012 and then two years after that I published the *Hollow Crown*, which was a history of the Wars of the Roses. But there were bits I skipped over because of the way those two stories worked and that was mostly the reign of Henry V. It felt like unfinished business in that respect but I also think Henry V is a particularly interesting subject for a medievalist because he was considered by his contemporaries, and by those who came afterwards, as a paragon of kingship. He did it right. He was the one who managed to be the perfect medieval king and so that's an interesting case study because it's a great way to look at what medieval kingship entailed and it's a great way to understand power, as well as being a dramatic and exciting story.

Why did you decide to dedicate much of your book to Henry's life before he became king?

Henry V became king when he was 26 and died when he was 35, so for the majority of his life he wasn't king. Since he was considered a paragon of kingship I felt a profoundly important question was, how did he get to this point where when he became king at 26 he just set off running? I felt that so much of that must have lain in his apprenticeship in the time before he was king and I felt that was a really important area of his life to explore as not just a prologue to the main story. In a way it is the main story with Henry. What are the lessons he learned under the disastrous, chaotic, tyrannical

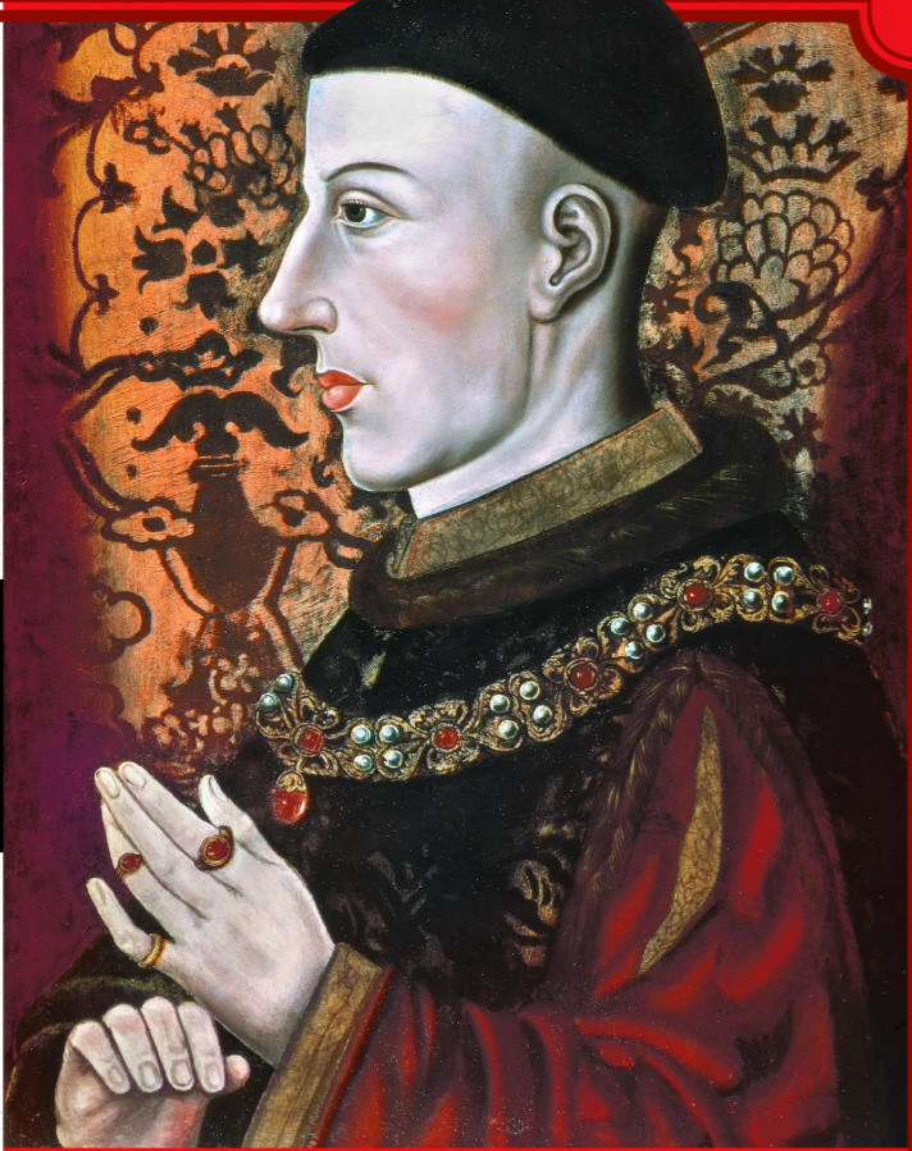
kingship of Richard II and the turbulent reign of his usurper father Henry IV? How do those experiences create the person that is ready to be such an effective king when his time arrives? It's kind of like *Batman Begins* – there's a great vogue for origin stories in cinema at the moment and I felt that the origin story of Henry V was interesting and important.

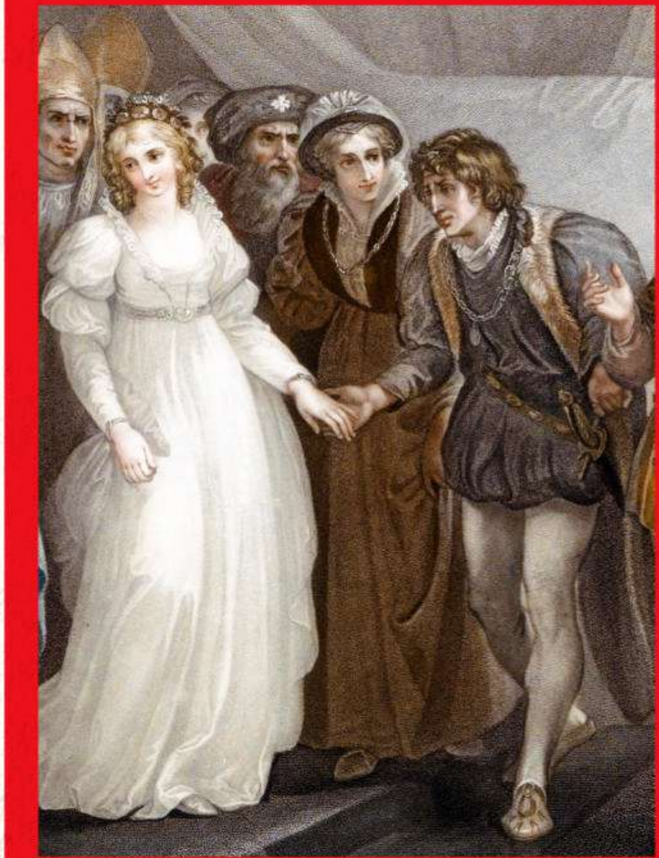
Do you consider Henry's kingship to have been successful?

Yes, almost too successful. He was so good that very few people can match him. Henry was the real deal. He understood that kingship was simple but not easy. There were really two fundamental duties of the medieval king as described in the image on the royal seal, which shows the king on the one side with a sword in his hand and on the other with the scales of justice. The job was to provide justice and order at home and to defend the realm, which was typically interpreted in the later Middle Ages in rather an aggressive sense, which was to go and fight in France and Scotland. Henry understood both sides of the duties of kingship exceptionally well and he had the experience by the time he became king to know what that meant. He also had enormously good luck. He was very lucky to live beyond the age of 16 after the Battle of Shrewsbury when he had a long operation to save him from an arrowhead in the face. He was very lucky to come to the throne at a time of absolute calamity and disaster in France when the French were embarking on their own 'Wars of the Roses'. Those two bits of good fortune combined with his exceptional instinct for the job allowed him to do the thing that all medieval kings wanted to do, which was conquer France and keep order at home. As I said, in a way, he was too successful, because the legacy of his conquests put enormous strain on both the English polity and English politicians after his death, but I find it hard to pin that on him.

What impact did Henry V have on medieval England and beyond?

He accelerated the Hundred Years' War to its end point. He was responsible for accelerating the development of the English language as the main language of bureaucracy and high-level ▶





ABOVE A portrait of King Henry V from the 15th century

LEFT Henry married the French king's daughter Catherine of Valois

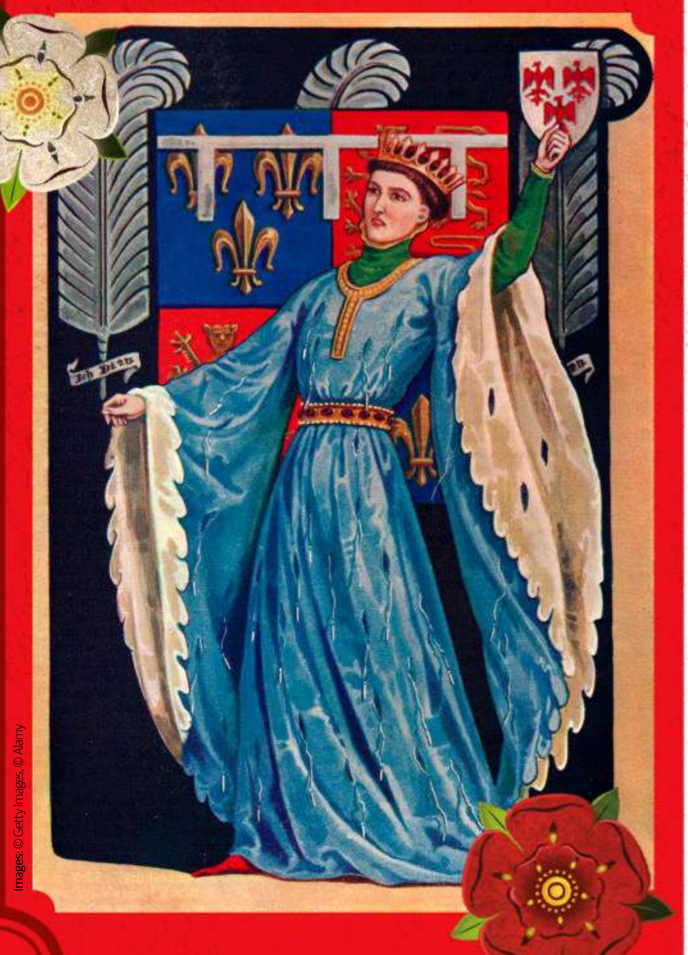
Images: © Getty Images; © Alamy

THE KINGSHIP OF HENRY V

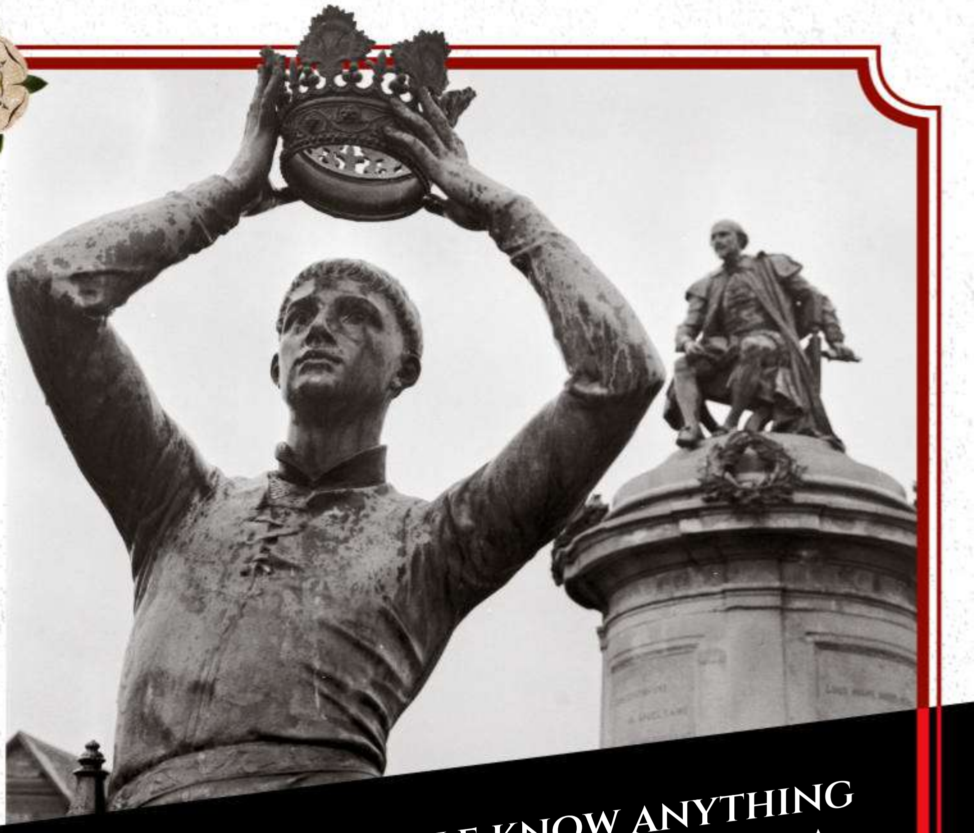
What did he achieve during his reign?

Henry V became King of England in 1413 and ruled until his death in 1422. During his time as monarch, he achieved what medieval English kings had been attempting to do for years – defeat the French. His victory over France came at the Battle of Agincourt in 1415, where he displayed his military prowess and instilled a feeling of patriotism across the English populace. Further victories in France saw Henry take French territories under English control, and in 1420 the Treaty of Troyes was signed, which officially appointed Henry and his descendents as heirs to the French throne.

Aside from his foreign exploits, Henry also had an impressive impact on his own realm. After years of turbulence under the reigns of Richard II and Henry IV, Henry V unified England under one steadfast monarch and consolidated his throne to create a secure period of rulership. As a result of the Treaty of Troyes, Henry was married to Catherine of Valois (the daughter of King Charles VI of France) and together the couple had a son, also named Henry. Upon Henry V's death, his eight-month-old son became King Henry VI and England was ruled by a regency council. Henry V's territorial gains in France were not able to be maintained, and ultimately the governance of the nation descended into chaos as factional rivalry developed between the houses of York and Lancaster, resulting in the Wars of the Roses.



Images: © Getty Images, © Alamy



ABOVE William Shakespeare's depictions of Henry V as a young man and as a king highlight the importance of Henry's youth in shaping his later reign

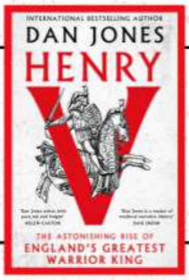
> "TYPICALLY, IF PEOPLE KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT HENRY, IT'S AGINCOURT AND A BOWL HAIRCUT! THERE REALLY WAS MORE TO HENRY THAN THAT"

discourse, and he developed a sense of Englishness defined in opposition to Frenchness. Of course, all of this was begun long before him in the reign of his great grandfather Edward III, but he pushed it forward. He perhaps gave unrealistic expectations to kings who followed him of what was possible, because so few who followed him shared his talent or his happy combination of political conditions. The young Henry VIII looked to Henry V as the model for what a great, youthful, strident medieval king should be but he quickly found that it was very hard to emulate that. And to our own day, the legacy through Shakespeare can't be ignored. Shakespeare saw in Henry V the shape of the story I've been describing, which is that you must understand the youth to understand the man: that there is an incredibly interesting, dramatic transformation that happens at the moment of this kingship; that here is a truly extraordinary leader who seems to be able to command the respect of men of all stations and to rally them around an abstract idea of England rather than just pure loyalty itself.

What do you hope that readers will take away from your biography of Henry?

I hope that they see that it's more than just Agincourt. Typically, if people know anything about Henry, it's Agincourt and a bowl haircut! There really was more to Henry than that. I hope readers see that a case study in great leadership, appropriate to the age, can be found in Henry V. ○

Henry V: The Astonishing Rise of England's Greatest Warrior King
(Head of Zeus, 2024)
by Dan Jones is available to buy now


INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLING AUTHOR
DAN JONES
HENRY V
THE ASTONISHING RISE OF ENGLAND'S GREATEST WARRIOR KING

THE STORIES, STRATEGIES, HEROES & MACHINES

www.historyanswers.co.uk

VICTORIA CROSS GALLIPOLI HERO
HISTORY of WAR
15 SEPTEMBER 1940
BATTLE OF BRITAIN DAY
How the RAF's Chain Home gave pilots the initiative
First-hand accounts of dogfights over London
Real events behind the victory over the Luftwaffe
MESSERSCHMITT BF 110
NAPOLEON'S GREATEST DEFEAT
"DO YOU WANT TOTAL WAR?"

ON SALE NOW

HISTORY of WAR

Available from all good newsagents and supermarkets

GREAT BATTLES

MILITARY MACHINES

HEROES OF WAR

SECRETS & INSIGHT

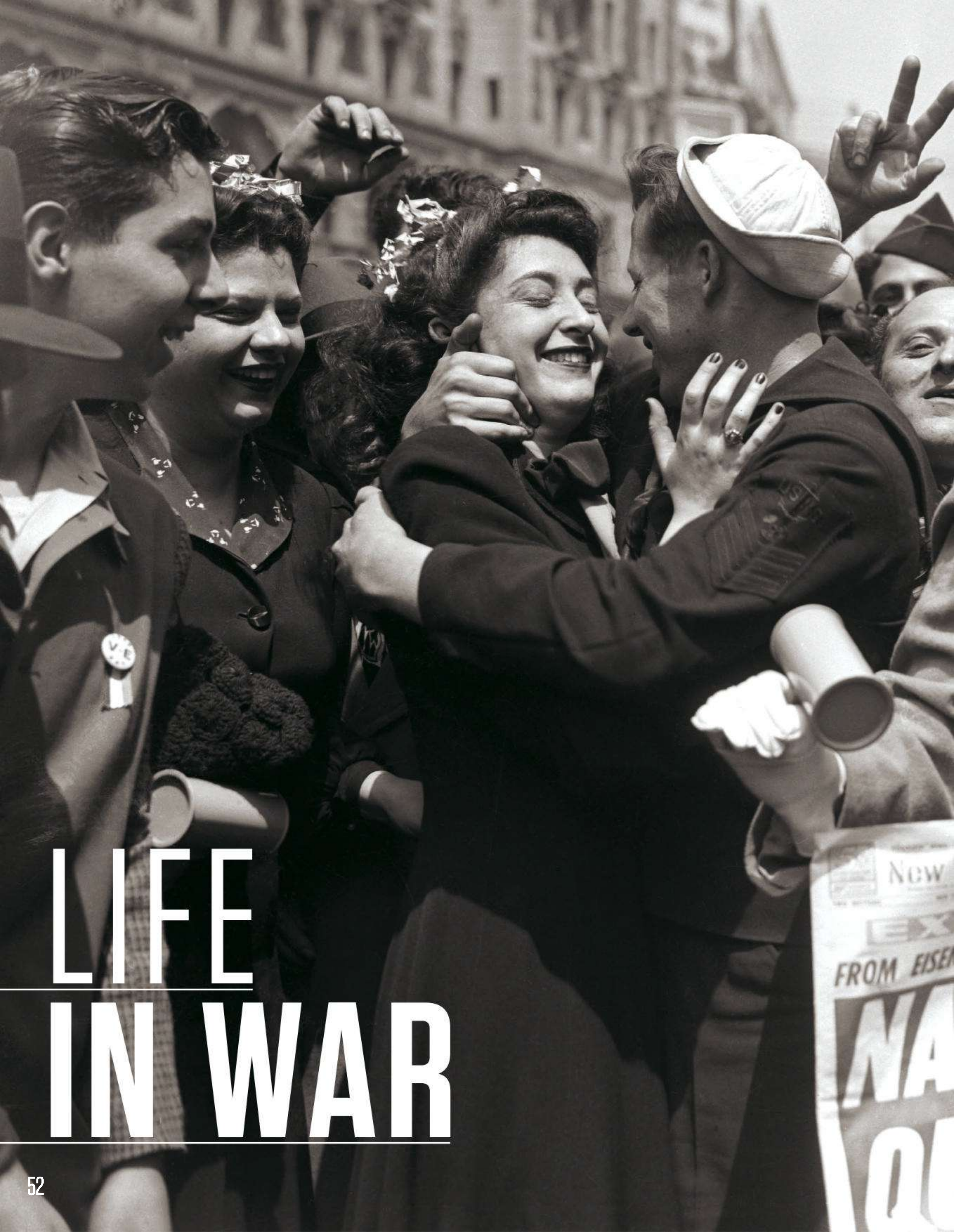
INCREDIBLE PHOTOS

BUY YOUR ISSUE TODAY

Print and digital subscriptions available at

www.magazinesdirect.com

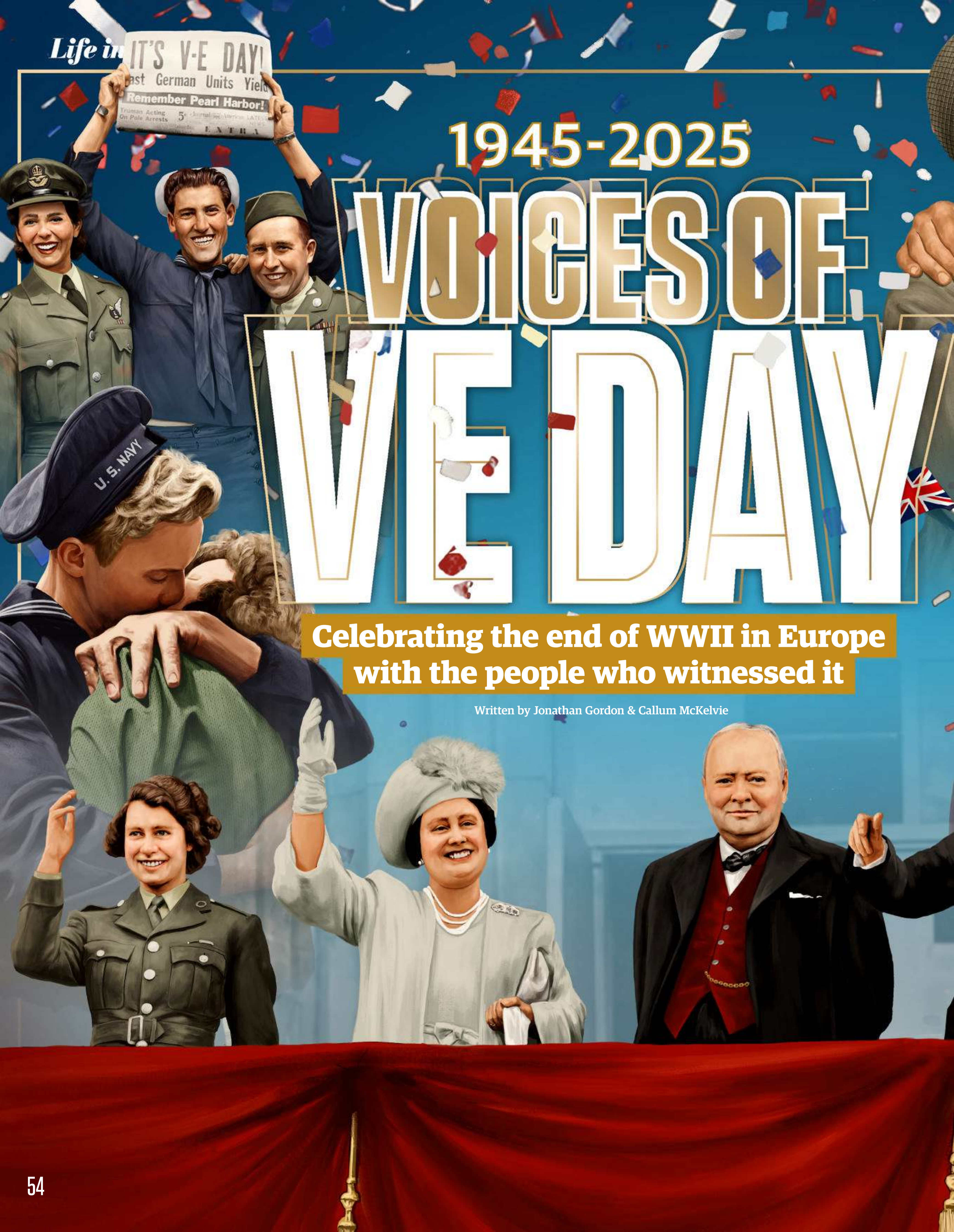
facebook.com/HistoryofWarMag twitter.com/@HistoryofWarMag


V-E
New
FROM EISEN

LIFE IN WAR

York Post
EXTRA
ENHOWER HQ:
NAZIS
QUIT!

©Getty Images


IT'S V-E DAY!
ast German Units Yiel
Remember Pearl Harbor!
Truman Acting On Pole Arrests
5¢
EXTRA
U.S. NAVY

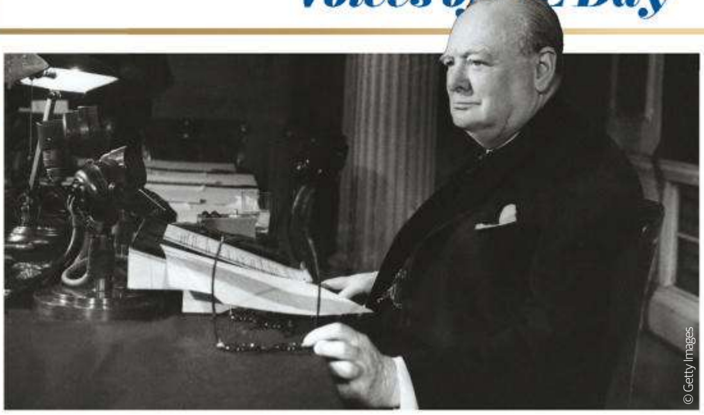
1945-2025

VOICES OF VE DAY

Celebrating the end of WWII in Europe with the people who witnessed it

Written by Jonathan Gordon & Callum McKelvie

Illustration by: Kevin McGivern


© Getty Images

> "My dear friends, this is your hour. This is not [the] victory of a party or of any class. It's a victory of the great British nation as a whole"

Winston Churchill's words to the crowd in London on 8 May 1945 are a neat summation of the moment of unity that was being felt by very nearly everyone in Britain after he had officially announced the end of the war in Europe. On 7 May, in Reims, France, German General Alfred Jodl had signed the surrender of all German forces, ordering a ceasefire and bringing the fighting to an official end at 23:01 on 8 May, Central European Time.

Negotiations for the end of the war had been ongoing since Grand Admiral Karl Dönitz had succeeded Adolf Hitler as German head of state. The Führer's suicide on 30 April 1945, as Berlin was being seized street-by-street by the Soviet Red Army, accelerated expectations of the war's end. On 4 May the unconditional surrender of German forces in the Netherlands, northwest Germany and Denmark was made to British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery at Lüneburg Heath. Three days later, at the Reims headquarters of Supreme Allied Commander General Dwight D Eisenhower, all German forces surrendered thanks to the signature of Jodl. A separate surrender agreement was made with the Soviet Union on 8 May, at the urging of Joseph Stalin, signed by German Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel in Berlin.

Expectation for an announcement of the end of hostilities in Europe had been building for at least a week ahead of 8 May. On 6 May, the *Sydney Morning Herald* was already discussing the anticipated news on its front page: "VE-Day news expected at any moment." A correspondent reported that: "Fear of Russian retribution has delayed the ▶

> "THE COUNTRY WAS TIRED OUT, EXHAUSTED, AND IT WAS A RELIEF THAT IT WAS NOW OVER"

“NO MORE SUFFERING AND HARDSHIP; PEACE HAD FINALLY DESCENDED UPON US”

German surrender to the Red Army.” In the morning edition of *The Manchester Guardian* on 7 May, it seems VE Day was still not certain: “The hour of Germany’s total surrender on all fronts is rapidly approaching. Simultaneous announcement of the news of the final capitulation will be made in London, Washington and Moscow. Mr Churchill will probably announce victory in Europe in a brief broadcast.”

Many had expected that the official announcement would land by 9pm on 7 May, but were left disappointed. In the BBC’s 2004 *WW2 People’s War*, John Ringham, who was 17 when the war ended, wrote: “Once D-Day had proved successful we all knew it was only a matter of time before it would be over. The country was tired out, exhausted and it was [a] relief that it was now over.”

The announcement that was made on 7 May revealed that the following day would be a national holiday and peace would officially be announced. Many didn’t wait to get the party started. “VE Day was officially declared on the 8th of May 1945 but the war in Europe was definitely over on that magic night before when London surged into life,” Joan Styan, who was 15 at the time, told *WW2 People’s War*. “London was aflame with human exhilaration. Bonfires blazed continuously over London and the sky was alight with the glow of victory. No more suffering and hardship; peace had finally descended upon us and everybody was at one with each other regardless of race, creed and status. Survival and freedom were all that mattered. We had waited so very long for this and in our wildest dreams had never envisaged a night like this.”

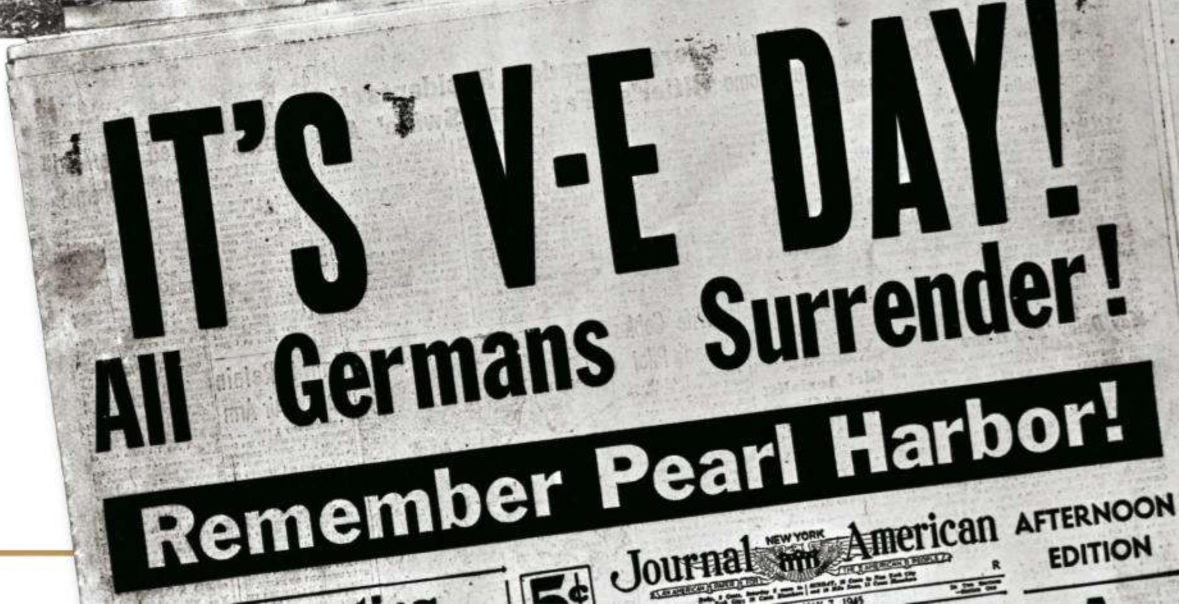
The Manchester Guardian’s Fleet Street staff in London reported at midnight: “Shouts and cries come up from the streets. The celebrations are gathering way. Someone arrives with stories of Piccadilly doings. Norwegian sailors climbing lamp-posts, American soldiers singing ‘Over there,’ Poles dancing, British commenting on the distance they are from Tipperary.” Ultimately they reflected on the change in mood and tone since the days of the Blitz: “It is the red glares that ring London, however, that hold the roof watchers. But they look up no more, only out and down. The long, long fight is over and won, and it is time to rest.”

Cities up and down the country were seeing similar scenes: “There was a big bonfire lit at the bottom of the road, someone had pushed a piano out and everyone was on Vale Road singing and dancing,” remembered Joyce Hughes, speaking to the Royal British Legion, of her memory of being ten years old in Liverpool at the time. “It was dark but everyone was out, 50 or more people in the street. We waited for mum and dad to come up and get us and they took us down to the bonfire. Everyone was happy, singing and hugging each other.”

The following morning, the wait for the synchronised announcement began. In the hours before Churchill’s scheduled 3pm address to the nation and then the House of Commons, people flocked to London. Sergeant Thomas Barry of the United States Air Force already had a pass to visit the capital and recalled the day in a letter, shared with *Find My Past*: “The

ABOVE Pat Burgess from Palmers Green celebrates the news on 7 May that the following day will be VE Day

LEFT Children marking VE Day in the remains of Battersea following the destruction of the Blitz



IT’S V-E DAY!

All Germans Surrender!

Remember Pearl Harbor!

Journal American

AFTERNOON EDITION

WORD FROM THE FRONT

Geraint Jones discusses the reaction to peace among Allied troops

GERAINT JONES

Geraint served with the British Army during three tours of duty as an infantry soldier in Iraq and Afghanistan. He is now the author of numerous fiction and non-fiction books.

Prior to the German surrender on 8 May, was there a feeling among the troops that the war was very nearly over?

By the beginning of 1945 it was clear to most British soldiers that the war was coming to an end, but that did not mean that those on the frontline expected to survive it. After seeing so many of their friends and comrades killed, and the number of the original members of their units dwindling, experienced soldiers felt a sense of fatalism and that sooner or later 'you would get yours'. It was not uncommon for British soldiers to be wounded, patched up and sent back to the frontline, only to be wounded, patched up and sent back again, leading to a belief that the odds dictated death or serious wounds. There was also a widespread feeling that to be killed or wounded in the closing stages of the war was the worst luck of all.

On top of all this, there was an incredible amount of resentment that Germany refused to surrender, and soldiers were particularly bitter about the loss of comrades killed by enemy soldiers 'fighting for a lost cause'. This could, and did, lead to several instances of no quarter being given, or asked.

How was VE Day celebrated by those serving on the European front?

For many frontline soldiers it was a moment of reflection, rather than celebration. Hundreds of their friends and comrades had been killed or badly wounded since their units landed in Normandy, and some of the 'old soldiers' in the army had been fighting as far back as 1940, in the Battle of France, after which they had been evacuated from Dunkirk.

Having stared death in the face for so long, the end of hostilities in Europe left many of the army's seasoned soldiers with a feeling of numbness. That's not to say that there wasn't drinking and a huge sense of relief, but the general consensus from frontline soldiers seemed to be that the large parties which we associate with VE Day were enjoyed more by those who had not been directly involved in the fighting.

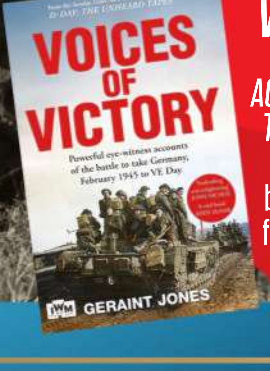
Then, of course, there was the knowledge that Japan had yet to be defeated, and that Victory in Europe did not guarantee survival for those who had made it through to the defeat of Nazi Germany. That summer of 1945, the BLA (British Liberation Army), which had fought its way from the beaches of Normandy into the heartland of Germany, was rechristened by wry soldiers in the army's ranks to reflect their likely destination: Burma Looms Ahead.

How soon did demobilisation begin and Allied troops start to return home?

Demobilisation began six weeks after the surrender of Japan, but an end to the Second World War did not mean that all of the service personnel who had been mobilised to fight it were immediately brought home, if they ever came home at all. Hundreds of service personnel conscripted to fight the Axis Powers lost life and limb in post-war conflicts, such as the Palestine Emergency, and it was a matter of years before all conscripts were 'demobbed'.

I do hope that, when we remember VE Day, we give a great deal of attention to the troops who were never able to return to their families, including those who were killed within months, weeks and even days of peace. Despite a widespread belief that 'the war was as good as won' by the beginning of 1945, thousands of British soldiers were killed in the army's final campaign against Nazi Germany, many of them in actions that have remained largely unknown. Some of these soldiers were 17- and 18-year-old replacements who were killed in their first battle. Others had been in action since before Dunkirk, some had landed with the first waves on D-Day, and a few had seized Pegasus Bridge. The family of Captain Ian Liddell, VC, who was killed a few weeks before VE Day, described these individual deaths and tragedies as pieces in "the mosaic of victory".

Two soldiers read the news of VE day in Verdun, France


VOICES OF VICTORY
Powerful eye-witness accounts of the battle to take Germany, February 1945 to VE Day
GERAINT JONES

VOICES OF VICTORY: POWERFUL EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNTS OF THE BATTLE TO TAKE GERMANY, FEBRUARY 1945 TO VE DAY by Geraint Jones is out now from Macmillan, priced £22

All images: © Alamy, © Getty Images

A ROYAL VE DAY

How the king and company spent Victory Day

11AM

The day at Buckingham Palace begins with the Changing of the Guard. Triumphant crowds form outside the gates. An estimated 100,000 people will gather there throughout the day.

1PM

The king has a celebratory luncheon with Prime Minister Winston Churchill, finishing at around 2.40pm. Churchill returns to Downing Street just in time to give his speech to the nation at 3pm.

3:15PM

King George VI along with Princesses Elizabeth, Anne and Margaret wave to crowds from the balcony at Buckingham Palace for the first, but certainly not the last, time that day.

ABOVE Winston Churchill addresses the crowds from the Ministry of Health following the announcement of peace

bugle call ‘ceasefire’ was sounded, then the Speaker of the House of Commons introduced Mr Churchill, who gave a very fine talk, sprinkled here and there with great cheering from the crowd standing in the square outside the House. He ended it with the words ‘God save the King!’ Then we snapped to attention as the British national anthem was played, and the crowd joined in the singing with hearts that were joyful and thankful after nearly five-and-a-half years of war. What a crowd there was – they filled the square overflowing, stretched past Parliament over Westminster Bridge to the south, for blocks on Whitehall to the east and west, and filled Birdcage Walk and Victoria to the north.”

Those not already in the centre of the capital started making their way there. “We listened to Mr Churchill’s victory speech on the radio first, before making tracks for London and Piccadilly,” recalled Joyce Smith, VHF direction finding operator for the Women’s Auxiliary Air Force, writing for the RAF Association in 1995. “Every Tube station was disgorging masses of people and all inward buses were full. The tide of people flooding into the West End reached its peak during the afternoon, and Piccadilly was packed with a steady flow of celebrators releasing their pent-up spirits in mad abandon, exploding with joviality.” She notes that those in uniform got special attention: “Everyone in the services got a handshake, embrace or a pat on the back, and we girls in uniform were greeted with hugs and kisses. Processions formed out of nowhere, people waving flags or whirling football rattles – anything that made a noise – all marching in step with linked arms or doing the ‘Lambeth Walk’.”

> “EVERYONE IN THE SERVICES GOT A HANDSHAKE, EMBRACE OR A PAT ON THE BACK”

Ray Smith was docking with the HMS Middleton when the announcement was made. “We ended up going to London and joining in the celebrations right in the middle of Trafalgar Square and ended up partying all day long, meeting some lovely Wrens [Women’s Royal Naval Service] along the way who we ended up sleeping in a shop doorway with as there were no hotels available – but we didn’t care, it had been the best day ever!” he told the Royal British Legion.

Also in Trafalgar Square were Joyce Digney and Cynthia Covello, photographed standing in the fountain. They had served in the Women’s Land Army, and Digney wrote to Covello’s family in 2006 recounting their experience, her letter shared with the Imperial War Museums: “We walked all over London, and unless you were there, you could not believe the euphoria; hugs, kisses, smiles and laughter. It was like a gigantic family coming together.”

Another focal point for the crowds was Buckingham Palace, with thousands of people gathering expectantly to see King George VI, Queen Elizabeth and Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret. “We were at the front of Buckingham Palace, with the masses of crowds behind us – everyone wanted to be there,” remembered Joan Blair, Auxiliary Territorial Service clerk stationed at Feltham, West London, speaking in 2021

5PM

Churchill and members of the War Cabinet arrive for a meeting. At 5.30, the king goes on to the balcony for a third time that day, this time accompanied by the prime minister.

9PM

The king gives a radio address from the palace, thanking the British people for their fortitude. However, he reminds them that the war in the Pacific continues to rage.

10:45PM

In an unprecedented move, the king gives permission for Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret (then 19 and 14) to leave the household incognito, accompanied by royal staff. They join the celebrations and later do the conga outside the Ritz.

0:30AM

The king makes his fifth and final appearance on the balcony of Buckingham Palace for the crowds. The VE Day celebrations continue long into the morning.

VICTORY
OVER GERMANY
1945

to the SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity. "Somebody important had got us to the front position, because we were connected to headquarters in London. We saw the royals come out on the balcony, and the young princess… Everyone screamed and clapped. We felt honoured to be where we were. I wish I'd had a camera."

What she likely didn't know was that the princesses were soon in the crowd with her. Famously, the young royals were given permission to leave the palace and enjoy the celebrations themselves. "My sister and I realised that we couldn't see what the crowds were enjoying so we asked my parents if we could go out and see for ourselves," Elizabeth II told the BBC in 1985. "We cheered the king and queen on the balcony and then walked miles through the street. I remember lines of unknown people linking

ABOVE Thousands of people gather in Trafalgar Square to mark VE Day

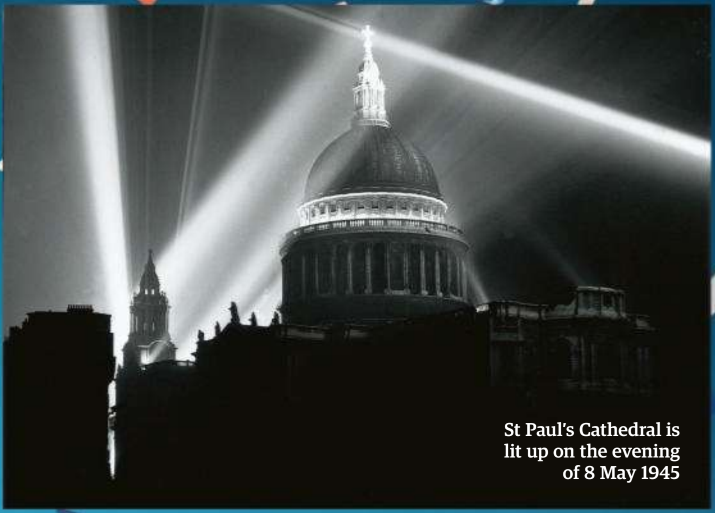
RIGHT Piccadilly Circus in London was another focal point for the celebrations

All images: © Getty Images

THE ROAD AHEAD

Lucy Noakes discusses VE Day on the homefront

A VE day party held on Dunstan Street in Netherfield, Nottingham


St Paul's Cathedral is lit up on the evening of 8 May 1945

What was the feeling in Britain in the run-up to VE Day? Was there an awareness that the war was coming to an end?

Reading through the Mass Observation diaries [a social observation project to record the thoughts and feelings of the British population], there was definitely an awareness that the war in Europe was coming to an end. But there was also increasing frustration when they kept expecting it to be announced, especially after the death of Hitler. One of the things I thought was interesting was people's scepticism. 8 May 1945 was a Tuesday. The previous week, people were expecting it to be announced all week. They began to get cross, thinking it was going to be announced on Friday and they wouldn't get any time off as any celebration would be held over the weekend. So there was a mixture of frustration, excitement and distrust as well.

What was the experience of VE Day like for the general British population?

It depended on several things. Firstly, geography. If you were able to get to a big city, there would likely be some celebration. In Newcastle the mayor gave a speech, and people gathered in the main square. Hull and other places had illuminations. There had been the blackout and then the grey out, so people were really struck by just how beautiful the coloured lights were. There was a general feeling of a holiday. But one of the saddest diaries I read in the Mass Observation Collection was from a farmer's wife in mid-Wales. She's miserable. She states that they didn't do anything, it rained all day, nothing was happening in her local town and even if it had been they didn't have any petrol to get there. The other thing that affected how people experienced VE Day was personal circumstances. If they had somebody who was either missing or a prisoner of war, you were far less likely to be celebrating. But then there were also a lot of people who didn't do anything because they were aware that people in their street had lost their sons, or someone's husband was in a prisoner of war camp, etc.

© Kate Clayton, University of Essex

LUCY NOAKES

Lucy is professor of History at the University of Essex. Her research focuses on the experiences of ordinary people during the Second World War. Since 2024 she has served as president of the Royal Historical Society.

Was there any bitterness felt on the homefront knowing that some service personnel were about to be sent to the Pacific?

No, not that I've seen. But there was a lot of anxiety when people's loved ones couldn't be located, particularly prisoners of war. There's one really sad story of a nurse from Preston. Everyone was celebrating, but she hadn't heard from her fiancé for about two years. It turns out he was in a prison camp in the east of Germany and had been sent on one of the death marches. They think he was in a group that tried to escape behind Russian lines and he was presumably killed during the attempt.

How did people feel when life didn't immediately return to normal?

People were really fed up. Particularly with rationing, which didn't just continue after the war – it got worse. On [21 July 1946] bread was rationed for the first time, potatoes were rationed [in 1946 also]. Between 1947-1948 you had a really cold winter but coal was still rationed [until 1958]. There is a sense of 'we won the war, so where's the reward?' But there were also a lot of people who still had faith in the Labour government to change things. Even when the Conservatives were re-elected in 1950 that post-war moment of radical social change didn't end. They didn't abolish the Welfare State, they didn't abolish the National Health Service. There was a real consensus among both major parties that, what was called in the mid-1940s the 'New Jerusalem', that Britain wanted to build, that it was worthwhile.

THE PEOPLE'S VICTORY
VE DAY THROUGH THE EYES OF THOSE WHO WERE THERE
Lucy Noakes

THE PEOPLE'S VICTORY: VE DAY THROUGH THE EYES OF THOSE WHO WERE THERE by Lucy Noakes is available now from Atlantic Books, priced £22

All images: © Alamy, © Getty Images

ABOVE Those fortunate enough to be released from duty flocked to city centres

BELOW-LEFT American soldiers stationed in London dance with personnel from the Office of War Information

BELOW-RIGHT As VE Day began, impromptu processions gathered to march to celebrations

arms and walking down Whitehall, all of us just swept along on a tide of happiness and relief."

Of course, celebrations weren't just being held in London. Up and down Britain, people were heading out into the streets and rejoicing the news of peace in Europe. "The entire city went a little mad," reflected Tommy Mac, speaking to *WW2 People's War* in 2003 about his experience in Glasgow, aged 14 at the time. He grabbed the hand of the nearest young woman and headed off into town. "She was to be my companion for the rest of the day. We made our way hand in hand from where we lived in the Cowcaddens part of the city in order to find the main celebration in George Square. Every street we went through was holding some party or another."

Janet Harvey, who worked at Clyde Shipyards during the war, told the BBC in 2020: "I remember the feeling of waking up and you knew that everything was going to be alright. We were in George Square [Glasgow] and we were all dancing and singing and cuddling each other, it was like the end of the world."

A Bede's Senior School project in 2020 gathered responses for people's memories of VE Day, including many from family members who had only been children themselves when peace was announced. "I was 11 years old when the war ended, and it just so happened that date coincided with my 11th birthday," Barbara Sheppard, who celebrated VE Day on Netherwood Street, Kilburn, recalled for the school. "My mother told me that it would be the biggest celebration I would ever have, and she was right. I remember the big parties in the street to this day - everyone came out with huge trestle tables, homemade food, wearing red, white and blue - and there was so much laughter. I was excited after years of being stuck indoors, and I was finally happy there was an occasion to wear pretty clothes that I had saved up, and wear plaits with red ribbons."

"ALL OF US JUST SWEPT ALONG ON A TIDE OF HAPPINESS AND RELIEF"

This was a moment that held a lot of promise, but there were still challenges to overcome, not the least of which on VE Day was food rationing, which had been introduced by the British government in January 1940. "The party food was, by present-day standards, fairly basic," Peter Olliff, who was six when the war ended, told Bede's Senior School. "We had fish paste, Spam and cheese sandwiches. These were followed by a selection of homemade cakes which did not have much flavour. Flour, yeast, butter and most of today's staples were not available. However, people were very inventive finding substitutes for these items."

Cake and ice cream weren't available for the children of Britain, and for the adults alcohol was still pretty tough to come by in some areas as well. "The incredible release from fear and pain had at last encompassed us and can only be described fully by those who experienced it," recalled Joan Styan, speaking to *WW2 People's War* in 2004. "There was just sheer unadulterated jubilation with no order whatsoever, despite the conspicuous absence of many alcoholic drinks. The masses were more intoxicated with victory than with alcohol!"

Meanwhile, word began to spread, perhaps a little more slowly, to those still out on the frontlines and stationed in Allied bases. Les Collins was wireless operator for the 1st Assault Brigade

ABOVE ATS women and US soldiers celebrate VE Day in Trafalgar Square

> "THE MASSES WERE MORE INTOXICATED WITH VICTORY THAN WITH ALCOHOL!"

Royal Engineers and was the one to decode the message that confirmed the surrender of Germany. Speaking to the SSAFA in 2021, he recalled: "We were still in operations and it came over my radio from a lieutenant that they had surrendered. I had to decode the message. I had my earphones on, and it came through in Slidex letters [a paper-based encryption system]. 'Surrender,' I was told, 'Germany has surrendered.' And the first thing we saw after was the German Army marching up the autobahn, 20-deep by 20-wide, whole columns. I didn't know there were so many. Seeing them march down and past us, with British troops around them… it was fantastic. Don't forget, we were overjoyed that they had surrendered. We had been living rough for 12 months. We just felt freedom at last!"

A man and his daughter mark VE Day in Paris

But while spirits were high in most quarters, for many the mood remained sombre. The end of the war in Europe also meant the time had come for reflection and to think about the future. Fighting was still raging in the Pacific and there was a shattered continent to rebuild after the ravages of conflict. "We may allow ourselves a brief period of rejoicing; but let us not forget for a moment the toil and efforts that lie ahead," Churchill had urged in his radio address at 3pm. "Japan, with all her treachery and greed, remains unsubdued. The injury she has inflicted on Great Britain, the United States and other countries, and her detestable cruelties, call for justice and retribution. We must now devote all our strength and resources to the completion of our task, both at home and abroad. Advance, Britannia! Long live the cause of freedom! God save the King!"

THE VE DAY RIOTS

In Halifax, Canada, festivities descended into chaos

Across the world, VE Day was marked with celebrations and festivities. However, in the town of Halifax in Nova Scotia, Canada, the situation got out of control. The town was woefully underprepared for the influx of servicemen, with few facilities to cater for them.

As celebrations began a mob formed in the streets. To begin with the rioters targeted liquor stores, stealing 61,500 litres of liquor and 33,000 litres of beer. Then the drunken mob attacked any shops they could find, and purportedly set fire to tram cars. The local police found themselves powerless against the thousands of rioters. Eventually, after a night of total chaos, the situation dissipated.

In total 564 businesses were damaged, 207 shops were looted and over 2,600 windows were smashed.

Distressingly there were also fatalities, with two navy personnel and a police officer killed in the night of mayhem.

Edith 'Peggy' Florence Cochrane worked in the Cabinet War Office and wrote to her future husband Lance Corporal Ronald Gibson summarising some of the mixed feelings of the day. "Well at last VE Day has come and gone, and as far as I'm concerned, it was a very great day, and one I'll never forget," she wrote in her letter, which was donated to the Imperial War Museums. "But during all the celebrations here in London, I couldn't help wondering all the time how you and all the other men who made it possible were spending the day."

Ron Goldstein, stationed in Italy as the war ended, recorded in his diary how he felt about VE Day: "I remember quite clearly that my emotions at the time were mixed," he wrote in an entry shared with *WW2 People's War*. "On the one hand it was good to feel that perhaps some of my loved ones back home were taking part in the scenes that were now taking place. On the other hand I, and in hindsight, I'm sure most of my comrades, felt somehow cheated that we, who had 'risked life and limb' and had been away from home for so many years, were not there in England to share in the triumph."

There were also plenty of people who had lost loved ones during the war, whether in battle, during the Blitz or as victims of the Holocaust. "I knew I didn't have a father anymore, but I was very happy, hoping my mother would be able to come to England, because there was no way I was going to leave," Henny Franks told the SSAFA in 2021. She had been one of the Jewish children rescued from Germany before the war in the Kindertransport programme and went on to volunteer in the Auxiliary Territorial Service during the conflict. "After the war the army wanted to send me to Germany to help. It was a voluntary posting and I refused. I said: 'No way will I go back, I'm glad I'm out of there, that's a miracle anyway.' If they had ordered me to go, I would have gone. I couldn't refuse orders. But they never did."

Ultimately, for one day at least, people were able to reflect. Whether those reflections brought joy or sadness, dwelt on victory or loss, or were a mixture of all of these feelings, it didn't really matter. The release was what was important, like exhaling after a long-held breath. And tomorrow could be something new.

"I say that in the long years to come not only will the people of this island but of the world, wherever the bird of freedom chirps in human hearts, look back to what we've done and they will say: 'Do not despair, do not yield to violence and tyranny, march straightforward and die if need be-unconquered,'" Churchill told the crowds gathering in London. "Now we have emerged from one deadly struggle, a terrible foe has been cast on the ground and awaits our judgment and our mercy."

ABOVE Neighbours in Clapham Common, London, throw a street party

RIGHT The ongoing hardship of rationing failed to dampen spirits

FURTHER READING

SUBSCRIBER EXCLUSIVE

Read more about VE Day in issue 89 of *All About History* via our digital archive

SCAN HERE

WIN £500
2 FREE GIFTS INSIDE
ALL ABOUT HISTORY
75th ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL
VICTORY

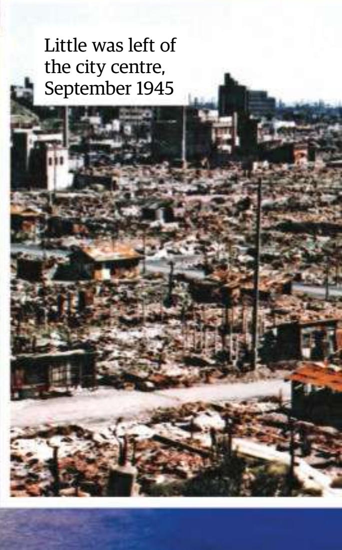
All images: © Alamy, © Getty Images

REBUILDING HIROSHIMA

Written by Jonathan Gordon

Eighty years after atomic bombs were dropped on Japan, the resurrection of one of its cities remains remarkable

> “THE GOVERNMENT MADE RESTORING HIROSHIMA A NATIONAL MISSION THAT REPRESENTED THE BEGINNING OF A NEW JAPAN”



Little was left of the city centre, September 1945

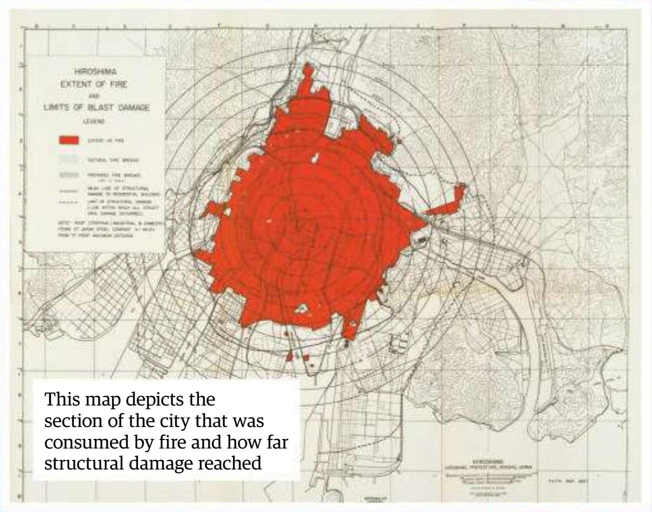
Walking around Hiroshima today, you will find a modern, bustling metropolis. Its wide main streets and high-rise buildings are evidence of a city of industry and commercial success. In some places, it's hard to believe that 80 years ago it was decimated by an atomic explosion. But Hiroshima holds tight to this legacy and, from the first days after the detonation, the city has charted a new path. It set its sights on a new future while openly wearing some of its scars as a vivid reminder of the destruction humanity can inflict upon itself.

The Bomb

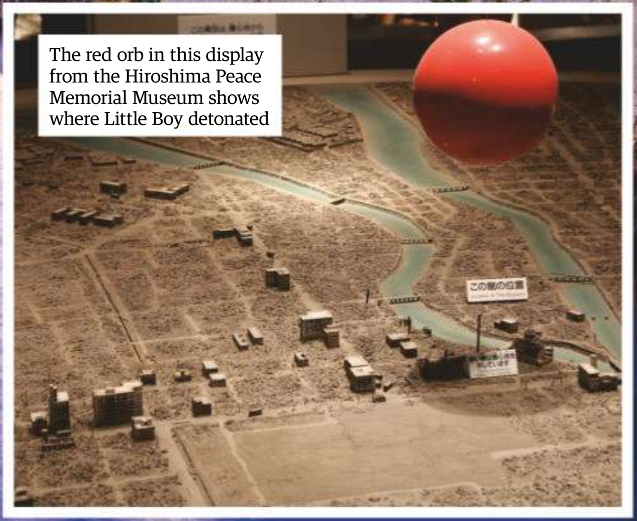
At 8:15am on 6 August 1945 an atomic bomb, dubbed Little Boy, was dropped on Hiroshima by a United States Air Force B-29 Superfortress heavy bomber named the Enola Gay. It detonated at 580 metres above the city, instantly killing between 60,000 and 80,000 people, with a final death toll of 135,000 from injuries, radiation sickness and other effects (about one-third of the 420,000 population). A few days later on 9 August, a second atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki.

Hiroshima was chosen as the Allies' primary bombing target because it was the home of the Japanese Second Army and therefore considered a major military asset. Its history dates back to the construction of Hiroshima Castle (1589) and the town that was built up around it. It wasn't until modernisation during the Meiji Restoration, from 1868, that investment in the area saw the town grow into a city. It was then made an administrative hub and garrison for the Japanese Army. Its port also made it an important location for the country's navy, while a trainline direct to Tokyo made it useful for troop deployment. The city even acted as the capital of the nation during the First China-Japan War (1894-95).

This is all to say that Hiroshima was a well-established, historic city of great cultural, economic and military significance before the atomic bomb was dropped. More than 10-square-kilometres of the city were flattened by the detonation and subsequent fires. About 90 percent of Hiroshima's buildings, many made from wood as was common across Japan, were either burned, burning or completely destroyed within the first 30 minutes. Only a handful of concrete structures managed to withstand the enormous blast and subsequent firestorm. ▶



This map depicts the section of the city that was consumed by fire and how far structural damage reached



The red orb in this display from the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum shows where Little Boy detonated

Images © Alamy, Getty

Hiroshima today is a city transformed

A quick response

Despite the carnage, attempts to get the city back on its feet began almost immediately. Power started returning to parts of Hiroshima on 7 August, the day after the bombing, and most remaining homes had electricity restored by November 1945. Some key transformer stations had suffered only minor damage and could be repaired relatively quickly. This recovery effort was in part thanks to the work of people from neighbouring towns and cities who risked their lives to offer assistance. Rail services continued to run in and out of the city, bringing in volunteers and vital aid, and the first priority was reconnecting power and water supplies to ensure essential services were available.

The shock wave of the bomb had badly damaged water pipes, with an estimated 80 percent of the city's water being lost to leakage. Many people were resorting to using river water, but this would have been contaminated in the immediate aftermath of the atomic explosion, posing major health risks. New wells and pumps were established to supplement supplies while repairs were made to the pipe network.

These kinds of logistical problems were the main concern, even more so than radioactivity, which was subsiding quickly. Managing the crisis and organising people was vital but of the municipal government's 1,000 employees, only 80 were able to report for duty after the blast. Fourteen of Hiroshima's 16 hospitals had been destroyed, 198 hospital doctors were dead, and 1,654 out of 1,780 registered nurses were also lost.

However, thanks to survivors and volunteers from nearby towns, around 99 medical stations were set up in Hiroshima within 24 hours of the bombing and another 240 were established just outside the city. A massive effort was also undertaken to quickly bury the dead to reduce the risk of disease. Even so, the health impact on survivors, known as hibakusha, would be an issue for years to come, with cancer being a long-term health concern for many.

The US set up the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission (ABCC) in November 1946 to track how the atomic blast had caused various health issues, such as cancers, developmental disorders and other ailments. ABCC offices were established in Hiroshima and Nagasaki but did not offer medical treatment – only assessment and analysis.

City of Peace

Once Japan had officially surrendered to the Allies, on 2 September 1945, and the occupation of the country had begun, reconstruction efforts gathered pace. The British Commonwealth Occupation Force arrived in Hiroshima in 1946 but did not assist the reconstruction directly – with its headquarters in the port city of Kure it was responsible for vital supply chains. The primary

RECONSTRUCTION TIMELINE

How the city rose from the ashes

6 AUGUST 1945
Atomic bomb Little Boy is dropped by the US Air Force and detonated over Hiroshima.

9 AUGUST 1945
Street cars resume a partial service around Hiroshima, helping move people around the city.

SEPTEMBER 1945
The Red Cross arrives, led by Dr Marcel Junod, bringing in an estimated 15 tonnes of medical supplies.

DECEMBER 1945
Mazda resumes production of the Batanko, a three-wheeled truck pivotal to moving supplies around Hiroshima.

APRIL 1946
The reconstruction plan for Hiroshima is approved.

6 AUGUST 1947
The first Peace Festival is held in Hiroshima in what becomes Peace Memorial Park.

AUGUST 1949
Hiroshima Peace Memorial City Construction Act passed by Japanese government to fund rebuilding efforts.

OCTOBER 1951
Peace Memorial Boulevard opens as a stretch of greenbelt in the heart of the city.

AUGUST 1952
Cenotaph to the victims of the atomic bomb is completed.

JANUARY 1953
Hiroshima Atomic Bomb Survivors' Treatment Council is formed to care for survivors and provide free or subsidised treatment.

AUGUST 1955
First world Conference Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs held in Hiroshima.

JULY 1966
The city council votes to preserve what's known as the A-Bomb Dome.

BELOW Only a few concrete buildings remained after the atomic bomb was detonated over Hiroshima

concern of the Western powers, at least until 1948, was the political reorganisation of the country.

It was largely left to the people of Hiroshima and the rest of the country to decide what was to become of this historic city, and the idea of reshaping it from a military centre into a City of Peace quickly gained traction. As early as 1946, citizens were being asked for their vision of what Hiroshima could be. Poet and peace activist Sankichi Tōge won a local competition for one such vision with his idea for a peace plaza memorial, library and museum, with 40 percent of the city covered in greenery. The concept was popular, but funding would be challenging.

In 1949 the Hiroshima Peace Memorial City Construction Law was passed by the national government, advocating for Hiroshima to be a region of Japan "symbolising the human idea of the sincere pursuit of genuine and lasting peace." New funding paths were opened up and state-owned land, including military land, was given to the city.

The government had made restoring Hiroshima a national mission that represented the beginning of a new Japan while also acting as a symbol of what its people could achieve together against huge odds. Massive subsidies were provided by the state to supplement everything from debris collection to housing construction. It wasn't universally popular, however, as prioritising Hiroshima was seen by some to be diverting funds from other places. Additionally, the law gave local authorities a lot of power to procure land and push forward with construction, which in many cases clashed with the hopes of citizens whose businesses or homes had previously occupied those locations.

Illegal housing, particularly along the river banks in the centre of the city, was a particularly thorny issue. Many of these residents had lost their homes in the bombing and had nowhere else to go. An estimated 3,000 people were living in this area and needed to be relocated to social housing. The effort to build more homes took some time, but made steady progress. One famous complex, known as the Motomachi residential area, had 1,800 homes ready by 1949, but wouldn't be complete until 1978.

As Tōge had envisioned, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park was built in the heart of the city with a museum, conference hall and cenotaph. Designed by architect Kenzō Tange, the Memorial Park was completed by the end of the 1950s, as was the reconstruction of Hiroshima's historic castle. The Memorial ▶

ABOVE-LEFT The community rallied to support many needs, such as education and social welfare

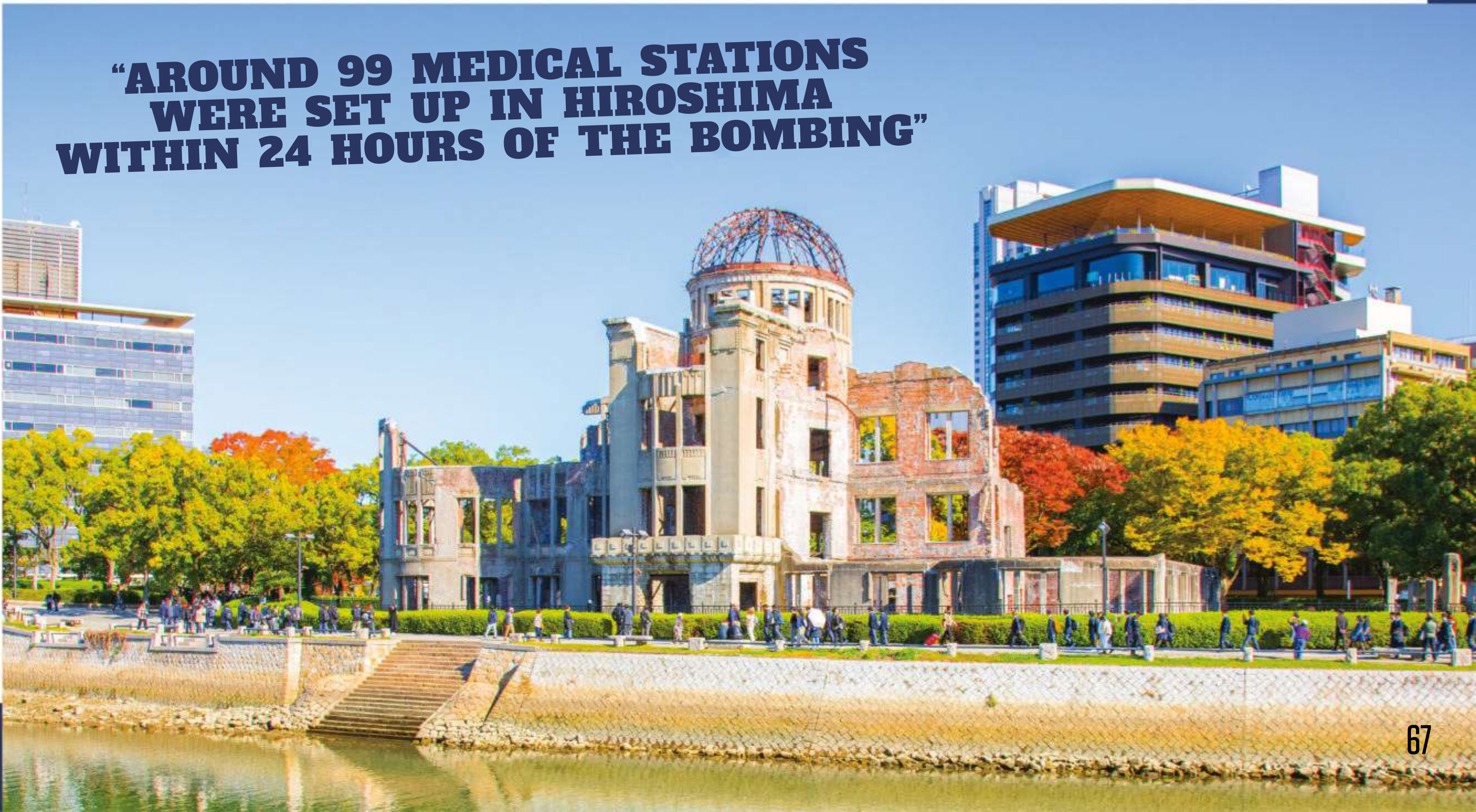
ABOVE-MIDDLE By 1959 the business district of Hiroshima looked like any other modern Japanese city

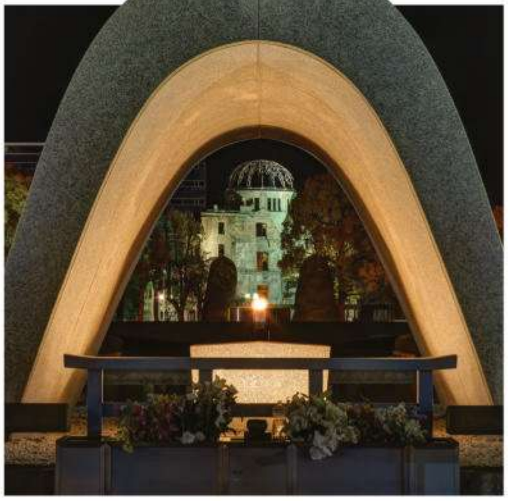
ABOVE-RIGHT This photo taken in 1954 shows how much of the city was quickly rebuilt

BELOW The A-Bomb Dome is a reminder in the heart of Hiroshima of what the city has come back from

Images © Alamy, Getty

> "AROUND 99 MEDICAL STATIONS WERE SET UP IN HIROSHIMA WITHIN 24 HOURS OF THE BOMBING"





ABOVE The Cenotaph for the Victims of the Atomic Bomb holds the names of all those who died

ABOVE, RIGHT Hiroshima Castle was rebuilt in 1958

Park, built right under where the bomb had detonated, had previously been the city's busy downtown district but was recast as a 122,000-square-metre public space. Turning such a valuable central area into a park was an important symbolic element of the reconstruction.

The rest of the city was reconstructed marrying the best of Eastern and Western design. While recovering from such a devastating attack was unique for the island nation, centuries of living with seismic activity and other natural disasters meant there was a long tradition of revival and rebuilding. Structures were frequently designed to be restored and renewed by subsequent generations. In fact, there had actually been a plan to modernise Hiroshima penned in 1919, and some residents thought that most of what remained of the old city should be completely swept away. Others were keen to retain something from the nuclear attack as a reminder of what they had contended with. Today the most prominent testament of the bombing is a building known as the A-bomb Dome, formerly the Hiroshima Prefectural Industrial Promotion Hall. Some considered it an ugly reminder of the pain the city had experienced, but it was officially recognised in Japan in 1966 and made a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1996. It's one of only a handful of locations in the city from 1945 left largely untouched.

WAS HIROSHIMA RADIOACTIVE?

Why it was safe to return earlier than you might think

Little Boy was a much smaller bomb than the nuclear weapons developed during the Cold War arms race after 1945. As a result, while more than powerful enough to level Hiroshima, it didn't emit the levels of radioactivity generated by later bombs. People in close proximity to the explosion were exposed to very high levels of radiation, with varying amounts of exposure further away depending on environmental conditions. Survivors of the bombing suffered from a range of horrible short- and long-term effects from this exposure, most notably in the form of various cancers that began emerging a couple of years later. Some children conceived before the bombing also suffered developmental issues. A report on this by the University of Columbia in 2012 concluded that there was no evidence of pronounced radiation-related disease in children conceived after the bombing, which shows how quickly radiation levels in the devastated city subsided.

An important factor in this is that the bomb did not detonate on the ground, but in the air, with the vast majority of the radiation absorbed into the atmosphere and dispersed. This also meant that neutron activation, when non-radioactive materials are made radioactive when caught in an atomic blast, did not occur. What little physical material from the bomb landed on the ground was highly toxic but was thankfully washed away relatively quickly by rain. Remarkably, radiation had returned to normal levels within a month of the bombing. The first proof of this for citizens of Hiroshima was that oleander flowers (kyochikuto in Japanese) began growing the following spring, becoming the official flower of the reborn city.

ABOVE-LEFT Only two years after the bombing, reconstruction was well under way in many areas

ABOVE-RIGHT The iron works were rebuilt in 1951, bringing much-needed jobs and investment

BELOW By 1949 there were still signs of damage, but also of massive redevelopment

Community action

While the government directed reconstruction of the civic spaces and other property, it was largely left to the people to rebuild community and social apparatus. Children who had been evacuated to the countryside during the war were now returning, but only a few school buildings remained standing. Local educators began running shifts in the mornings and afternoons for different groups so that everyone could receive educational support, with parents banding together to help fund these efforts.

Additionally, a council of 'war victims' associations' was set up to help manage the distribution of lumber, nails and glass panes so people could rebuild their homes in the face of supply shortages. This council also arranged care for orphans and provided bathhouses and community housing. Food supply problems became so acute, however, that in the summer of 1946 about 50,000 people were evacuated back to the countryside by the government and food relief was offered in those areas.

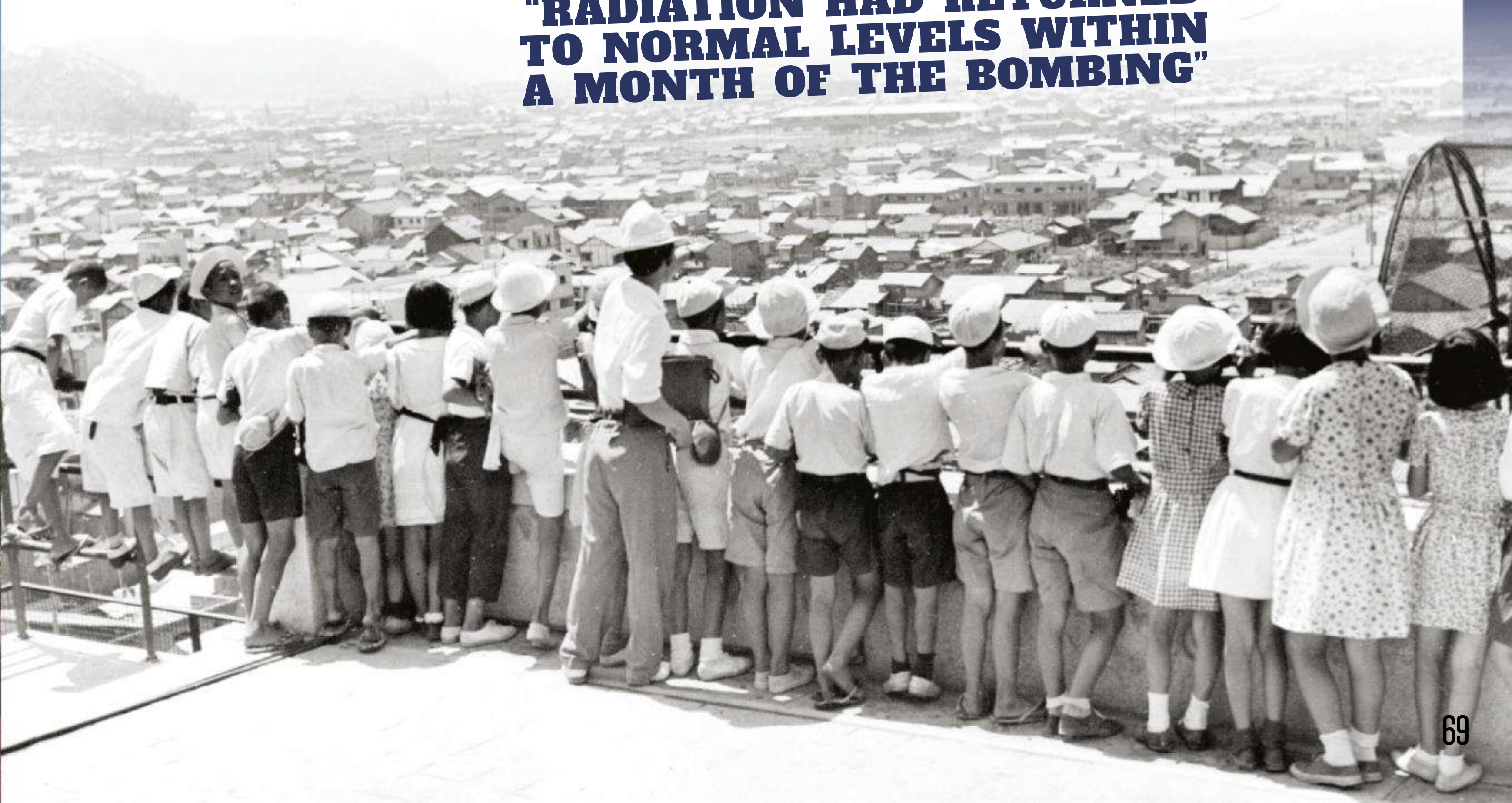
One particularly remarkable aspect of Hiroshima's recovery is that financial services returned to the shattered city within just a few days of the bombing. Staff from the Bank of Japan reopened their building, damaged by fire but still standing, and allowed staff from other banks to offer services from their location. As such, loans and insurance could be arranged, allowing residents and business owners to get to work rebuilding their lives far more quickly than might otherwise have been the case.

The economic recovery of Japan became the focus of the Allies too from 1948 when Cold War concerns about communist influence took hold. Getting Japanese industry back on its feet became a priority and Hiroshima, as a former industrial powerhouse, was primed to take up its part. War in Korea from 1950 opened up demand for exports from Japan in a major way, and the island nation acted as the key supply location for United Nations forces in Korea, which was a massive boon to the economy. This also made Japan an important military hub, meaning that the US was essentially guaranteeing its security. By 1958 the population of Hiroshima was already back up to 410,000 people, which in itself brought in more business and greater tax revenues.

Hiroshima is a city remade and reborn. It held its first Peace Festival on the anniversary of the atomic bombing in 1947 and has held it nearly every year since, calling for nuclear disarmament and world peace. The city also hosted the 49th G7 Summit in May 2023 and saw foreign visitor numbers grow to about 500,000 in the following year. In 2024 the Peace Memorial Museum received over two million visitors, about 30 percent of whom are thought to have been from overseas. Today, the population of Hiroshima is more than one million. ○

Images © Alamy, Getty

> **"RADIATION HAD RETURNED TO NORMAL LEVELS WITHIN A MONTH OF THE BOMBING"**



DEVILS IN THE DARK

CRIME IN BLACKOUT LONDON

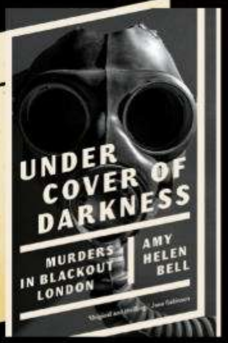
Written by Callum McKelvie

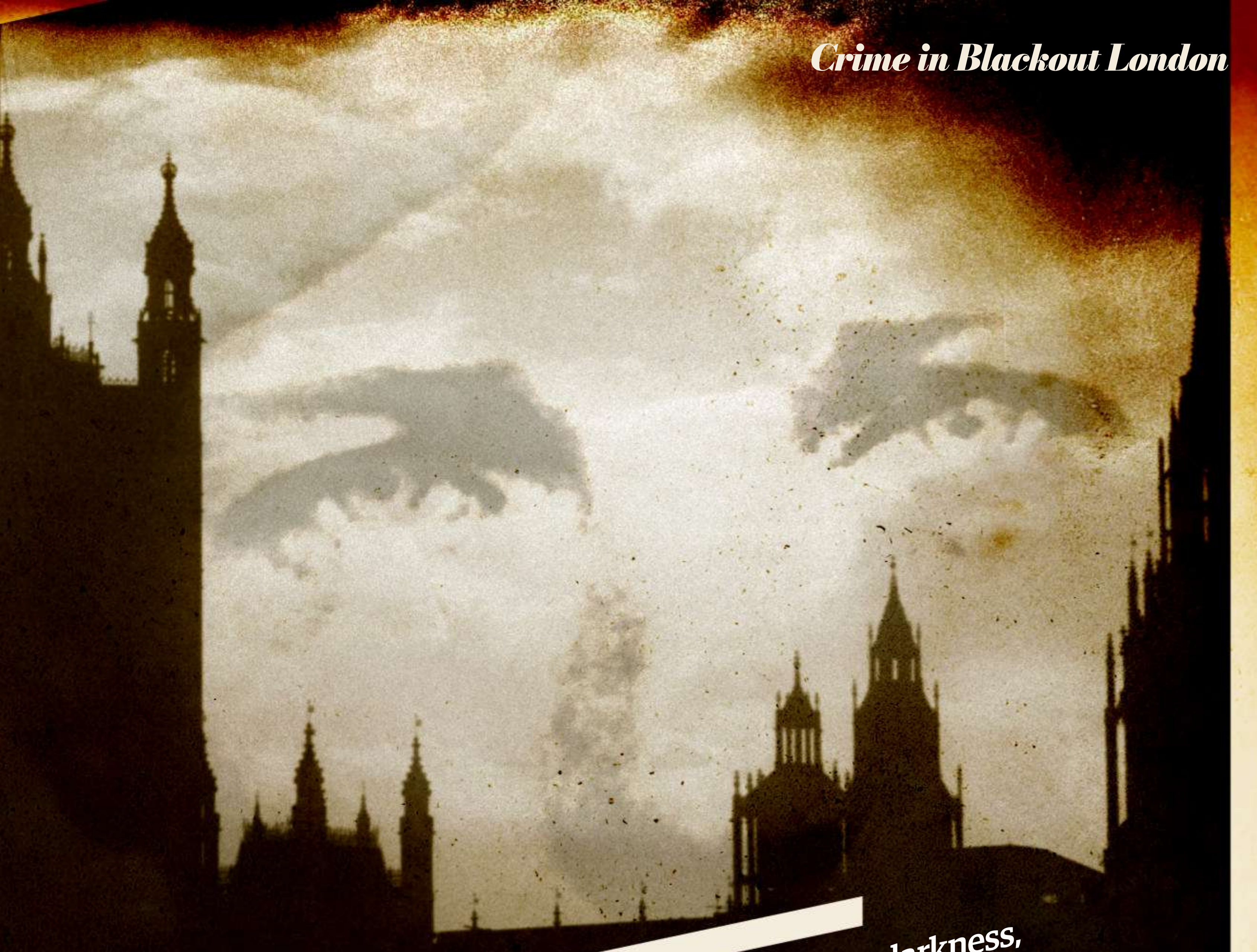
EXPERT BIO

© Yale

AMY HELEN BELL

Amy is a historian at Huron University, Canada, and the author of several books on the Second World War. Her book *Under Cover of Darkness: Murders in Blackout London* is out now from Yale University Press priced £22.


UNDER COVER OF DARKNESS
MURDERS IN BLACKOUT LONDON
AMY HELEN BELL



As WWII Britain plunged itself into darkness, it wasn't just the German bombs civilians had to fear

In early September 1939, as Hitler's armies advanced across Europe, the British government began preparations for war. One of its concerns surrounded the threat of aerial attacks by the Luftwaffe - Nazi Germany's air force. Technology had developed a great deal since the Zeppelin airship raids of the First World War and the Luftwaffe had already demonstrated its deadly capabilities during the Spanish Civil War (1936-39).

As part of Britain's air defence, measures were taken on the ground to limit the effectiveness of German air raids. One of these was the blackout, the strict policy of extinguishing all light during the night hours to make it harder for German pilots to identify their targets. But what the government did not anticipate was the number of criminals who quickly took advantage of the newly darkened streets.

Historian Amy Helen Bell has meticulously researched this period, attempting to shine a light on the many horrific murders and crimes in her book *Under Cover of Darkness: Murders in Blackout London*. "My first doctoral work was on the London Blitz, exploring how civilians experienced it as the first total-war against an unseen enemy," she tells us. "In researching this I came across a particular case in which a man murdered his wife and attempted to make it appear as if she had been the victim of a German bomb. I knew there had to be many more similar cases." ▶

> "ALONGSIDE THE THIEVES AND BLACK MARKETEERS THERE WERE OTHER, FAR MORE SINISTER CRIMINALS AT WORK IN WARTIME LONDON: SERIAL KILLERS"

All images: © Alamy, © Shutterstock

ABOVE Throughout WWII London was subjected to blackout restrictions each night

ABOVE RIGHT The capital was targeted by the Luftwaffe 71 times during the conflict

BELOW Robert Fabian (right) with hangman Albert Pierrepoint. Fabian was a famous inspector whose career began during the war

THE BLACKOUT BEGINS

The blackout was announced on 1 September 1939 – the same day that Nazi troops marched into Poland. Two days later, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain solemnly declared that Britain was now at war. On 16 October the first of many German air raids occurred. The purpose of these raids was twofold: they aimed to destroy strategic targets that were vital to Britain's war effort, while also damaging the morale of the British civilian population.

While the Royal Air Force (RAF) took to the skies to fight the invaders and anti-aircraft guns targeted enemy planes from the ground, blackout measures plunged Britain's cities into darkness. The RAF conducted a series of tests that concluded that even its own pilots struggled to identify landmarks when London was shrouded in darkness. As a result, street lamps were left unlit, homes used thick blackout curtains and car headlights were covered with tape so only a thin sliver of light lit the way.

"The blackout comes before any bombing raids actually occurred, it's announced even before war is officially declared," Bell explains. "The first impact of the blackout on civilian life in London is a huge increase in road accidents [1,130 in September 1939 alone compared to 544 the previous year, according to the Imperial War Museum]. Then, of course, there is a huge increase in property crime and, in the following years, in black market crime."

CRIME WAVE

Criminals began to take advantage of the wartime measure almost as soon as the blackout began. An article in *The Scotsman* newspaper, dated 2 October 1939, detailed how the first month of darkness had seen an unprecedented increase in crime in Edinburgh. *The Scotsman* stated the city had been "hit by a black-out crime 'wave' which caused considerable perturbance", before declaring that shops were targeted by "smash-and-grab raiders" who looted items such as "bicycles, tinned foods, jewellery, clothing and other sundry articles".

These criminals would often use ingenious methods to avoid being caught. "Thieves would disguise themselves by putting on air raid warden uniforms," says Bell. "If they were discovered they would pretend that they were clearing out bomb debris, but in reality they were looting shops."

The strictly enforced rationing of essential items such as sugar, meat, cheese and butter, which began in January 1940, soon led to a flourishing trade on the black market. The selling of once freely available items, which were now scarce, could be highly lucrative. According to *The Guardian*, gangster Billy Hill was able to sell sausage skins for £500 a barrel, roughly £3,000 in today's money.

But this was not all that the police had to deal with and as the war waged on – new forms of crime began to appear, particularly in London. "In the second half of the war, especially when American and other foreign servicemen are on leave in London, there is a huge increase in violent crime," Bell explains. "These soldiers also have guns and suddenly more firearms begin to appear on the black market. The result is an almost exponential increase in violence.

"One of the cases that really struck me was the case of Phillip Berry. He was a British Nigerian sailor who had already been jailed for assaulting his partner. He witnesses a racist Dutch sailor abusing an African American soldier and intervenes. Berry pulls a gun on the sailor, and when the sailor insults him too he shoots him dead. Originally, the court stated that the Dutch sailor's racist language was not legal provocation. Later, however, this was changed and Berry's [death] sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. It's a fascinating example of wartime anxieties surrounding race."

THE BLACKOUT RIPPER

Alongside the thieves, black marketeers and trigger-happy troops, there were other far more sinister criminals at work in wartime London: serial killers. "Gordon Cummins is the name that people associate most with wartime crime," says Bell. "He's an interesting case. He's in his late 20s, is in the RAF, has a good relationship with his wife and a good relationship with his parents. He's never been in serious trouble before. But suddenly, over the course of six days, he targets and kills numerous women."

Known as the 'Blackout Ripper', Cummins' first victim was discovered on the morning of 9 February 1942 when the body of 41-year-old Evelyn Hamilton was found in an air raid shelter. One day later, Evelyn Oatley was discovered in her flat in Soho, her corpse violently mutilated. Over the following two days Cummins killed two more women: ▶

LEFT Across the country the police used ingenious methods to remain visible during the blackout. In Lancashire they wore white uniforms

"THE METROPOLITAN FORCE'S STAFFING LEVELS WOULD REMAIN LOW FOR THE DURATION OF THE WAR AND DID NOT RETURN TO THEIR NORMAL LEVELS UNTIL THE LATE 1940s"

CONFLICT KILLERS

During the Second World War a number of mass-murderers were active across the globe

BRUNO LÜDKE

Germany

Although most of Lüdke's murders were committed prior to the war, he continued to kill during the Nazis' reign of terror and is suspected to have slaughtered between 50 and 80 people. After his arrest he was subjected to gruesome medical experiments and died in 1944 at the age of 35. However, Lüdke was mentally disabled and some have questioned whether he was actually responsible for the murders, or whether he may have been coerced by the authorities into confessing to crimes that he did not commit.

LEONARDA CIANCIULLI

Italy

When Cianciulli heard the news that war had broken out, like many mothers she was terrified that her son would be called up to fight. However, Cianciulli believed in the power of witchcraft. She killed three women and used their blood to make tea cakes, then melted down the body of her final victim to make soap in the belief that these grisly human sacrifices would save her son. She only confessed to her crimes when suspicion fell on him.

DR MARCEL PETIOT

France

By the time the Second World War began, it's suspected that Dr Petiot had already committed a number of murders. In Paris, he began offering help to Jews looking to flee the city, then injected them with poison and stole their money and valuables. Following his arrest in 1944, 30 bodies were discovered hidden in his home, and during his trial he confessed to some 60 murders. Even then, it was suspected he was responsible for even more.

EDDIE LEONSKI

Australia

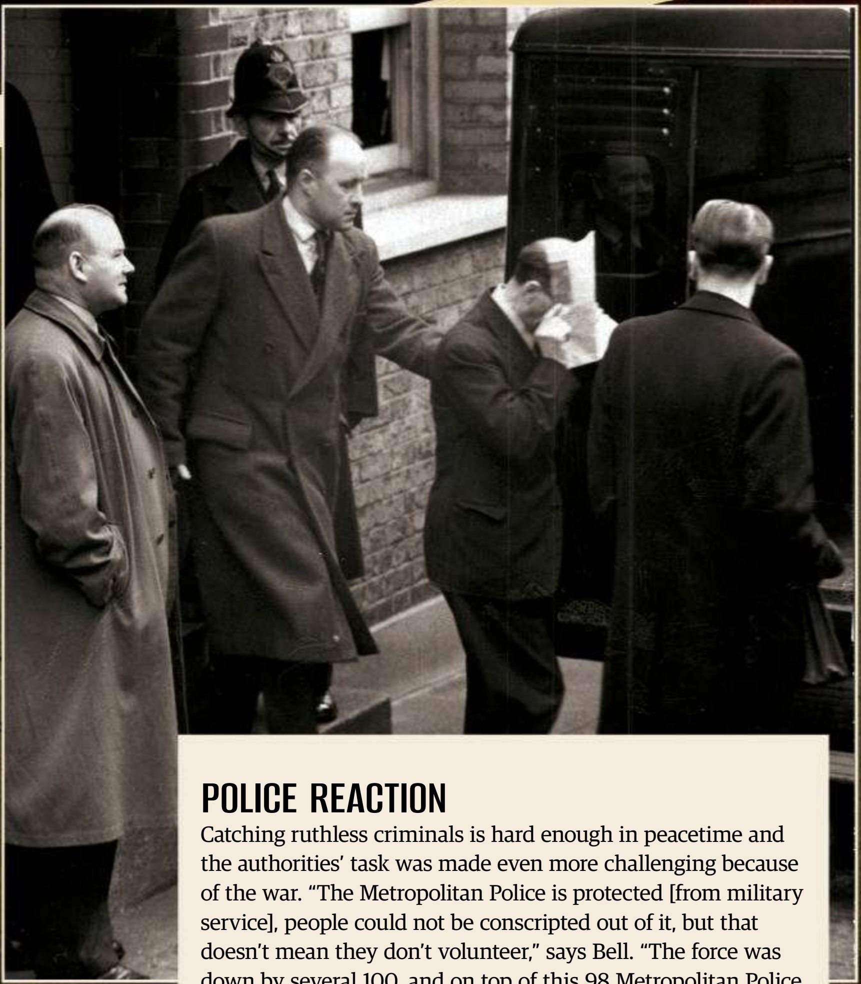
Known as the Brownout Strangler, Leonski was an American soldier based in Melbourne, Australia, from 1942. During the war the city did not engage in full blackouts but instead dropped the voltage, leading to 'dim-outs' that were also referred to as 'brownouts'. During May 1942, Leonski strangled three women before he was caught. His trial occurred under American military law and he was sentenced to death, his execution taking place on 9 November 1942.

PAUL OGORZOW

Germany

Ogorzow was a serial killer and rapist nicknamed the S-Bahn Murderer for his habit of using the S-Bahn railway where he worked to attack his victims. He took advantage of the blacked-out train carriages to target women travelling alone and who were not suspicious of a uniformed railway employee approaching them. After his arrest in 1941 he confessed to eight murders, six attempted murders and 31 sexual assaults.

All images: © Alamy, © Getty Images, © Shutterstock



LEFT Serial killer John Christie murdered his first victims during the Second World War

ABOVE Christie shown leaving court after his conviction

BELOW Gordon Frederick Cummins, the Blackout Ripper

Margaret Florence Lowe on the 11th and Doris Jouannet on the 12th.

Cummins then made two failed attempts to claim further victims, assaulting Catherine Mulchany on the 12th (shortly before his murder of Jouannet) and Margaret Heywood on the 13th, leaving behind evidence in both cases. In his haste to leave Mulchany, he left his RAF webbing belt, and after his attack on Heywood he left behind his gas mask and haversack.

The haversack was to prove the crucial piece of evidence because Cummins' service number was scrawled inside it. He was arrested on 14 February and when searching his quarters police officers uncovered a number of items he had taken from his murder victims, as well as a bloodstained shirt and traces of dust from the air raid shelter where Hamilton's body had been discovered. On 25 June 1942 Cummins was executed by famed executioner Albert Pierrepoint, and the Blackout Ripper's reign of terror was finally over. But there were other killers still operating on the forboding streets of blackout London…

POLICE REACTION

Catching ruthless criminals is hard enough in peacetime and the authorities' task was made even more challenging because of the war. "The Metropolitan Police is protected [from military service], people could not be conscripted out of it, but that doesn't mean they don't volunteer," says Bell. "The force was down by several 100, and on top of this 98 Metropolitan Police Officers are killed on duty by enemy action and 210 seriously injured. The City of London Police lost four men on active duty during the air raids."

The main solution to the Metropolitan Police's manpower problem was to use the First Police Reserve – retired officers who were brought back onto the force. Despite this, the Metropolitan force's staffing levels would remain low for the duration of the war and did not return to their normal levels until the late 1940s.

The over-stretched police force did its best to overcome its manpower shortage in the face of rising crime. "They are working incredibly hard," Bell tells us. "If you examine criminal files, for example missing person cases, there's an enormous attention to detail. If a body has been found and there's no direct witnesses, they'll still take as many statements as possible. So despite the perception that crime is out of control, when it comes to homicide investigation they are still working incredibly hard."

The Metropolitan Police also had a number of detectives who would go on to become particularly noteworthy after the war. "A lot of the detectives who get their start during the war later become big names in homicide investigation, for example Robert Fabian," Bell explains. Better known as 'Fabian of the Yard', he would eventually reach the rank of superintendent and is best remembered as the detective who investigated the 'witchcraft' murder of Charles Walton in February 1945.

Following his retirement in 1949, Fabian became a household name. He wrote a number of books detailing his exploits that were later turned into a popular TV series *Fabian of the Yard*, which ran from 1954-56. In 1956 he even appeared on BBC radio's *Desert Island Discs* (choosing an umbrella as his luxury item) and was a guest on the TV

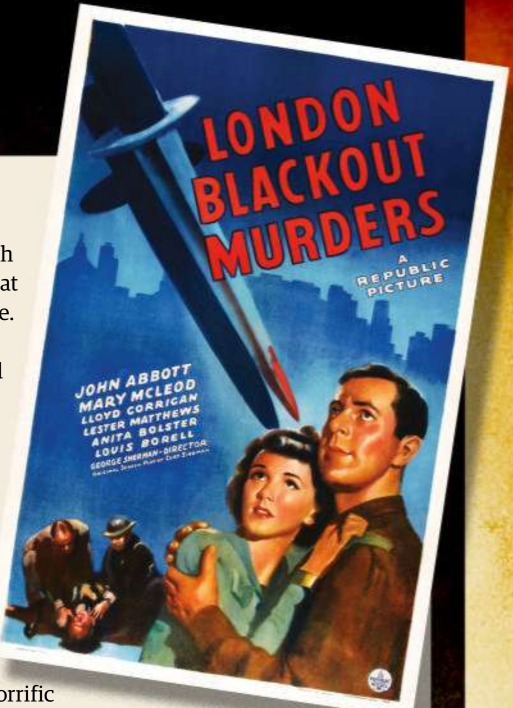
> "ON 23 APRIL 1945, NEARLY SIX YEARS AFTER IT BEGAN, THE BLACKOUT WAS FINALLY LIFTED"

series *What's My Line?* in 1951 and *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson* in 1971.

RILLINGTON PLACE MURDERS

Undoubtedly one of Britain's most infamous serial killers is John Reginald Christie, better-known as the man responsible for the 10 Rillington Place murders. Although active until 1953, Christie is known to have murdered his first victim, Ruth Fuerst, sometime in August 1943 while the war still raged. What was more, Christie utilised his position as a war reserve policeman to abuse his victims' trust. "He's known and trusted in the community," says Bell. "He becomes friends with Fuerst and is able to entice her to his house. Once there, he strangles her."

But Fuerst was not Christie's only wartime victim. A year later, in October 1944, Christie convinced Muriel Amelia Eady to visit his home where, after tricking her into breathing in domestic gas, he raped and strangled her. Both bodies were buried in the back garden of 10 Rillington Place, where Christie occupied the ground-floor flat. The remains of Fuerst and Eady would not be uncovered until almost a decade later.



RIGHT Before WWII had even ended, low-budget US films such as this 1943 thriller used the blackout as a setting

Between the end of the war and March 1953, Christie killed at least six more people. Among them were Beryl Evans, 20, and her one-year-old daughter Gerladine, who occupied the top-floor flat. Tragically, husband and father Timothy Evans was arrested in 1949 and executed for the murder of Geraldine. This horrific miscarriage of justice not only sent an innocent man to his death, but it also allowed Christie to remain active for a further four years.

During this time he was able to claim several more victims, including his wife Ethel. His reign of terror only ended when he was forced to move out of his flat by his landlord after he was discovered subletting it to another couple. When a tenant in a different property was given permission to use the now-empty kitchen, he discovered the remains of several of Christie's victims hidden inside an alcove. A police investigation then found the remains of Fuerst and Eady buried in the garden. Christie was executed on 15 July 1953.

In 1965, Britain began the process of ending capital punishment for murder, formally abolishing it in 1969. In 2004, after a long campaign by Evans' family to have his conviction quashed, judges dismissed their appeal but did state that Evans should now be considered innocent of both murders. Justice Collins said: "The material put before us persuades me that Timothy Evans should indeed be regarded as having been innocent of the charge of which he was convicted." He added that "no jury could properly have convicted him of murdering his wife".

INTO THE LIGHT

On 3 April 1945, nearly six years after it began, the blackout was finally lifted. Prior to this, beginning in September of the previous year, the government had sanctioned the move in some areas towards a 'dim out'. This allowed the use of more lights than in the previous years but still involved heavy restrictions. However, the relaxing of restrictions was complicated by newspaper articles that mistakenly suggested a full lifting of the blackout was occurring.

The blackout has become part of our nostalgic view of the Second World War's home front in the UK, part of the mythic 'Spirit of the Blitz' which we saw referenced so much during the recent coronavirus pandemic. But the real blackout was fraught with danger, not only from German bombs but also from thieves, looters and serial killers who took advantage of the darkness. So the next time you experience a blackout of your own, spare a thought for the population of wartime London taking shelter not only from the threat of relentless German air raids but also from the criminals that lurked in the dark. ○

FROM BATTLE TO BLITZ

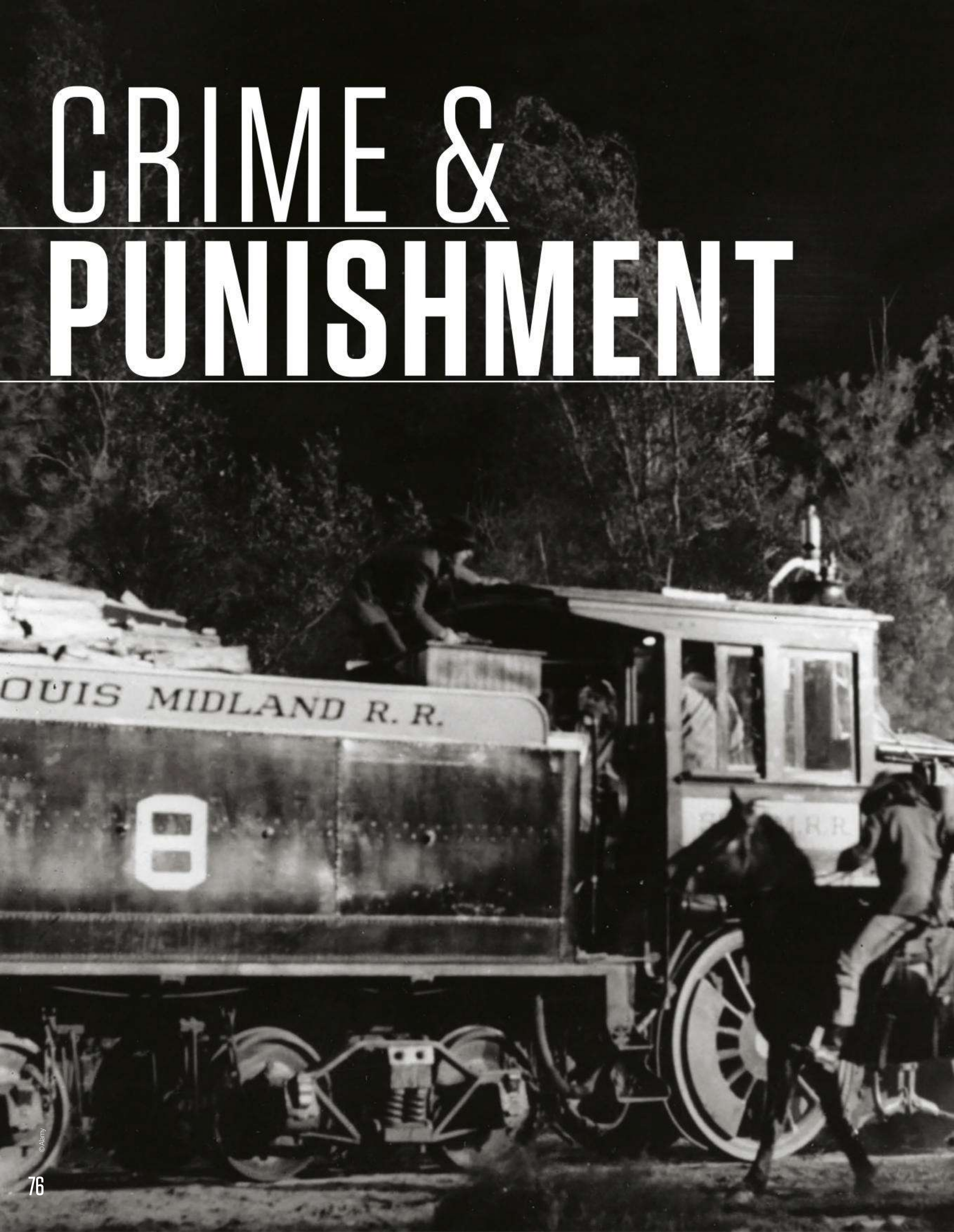
How the Battle of Britain led directly to the Blitz

Following the 1940 evacuation of British forces from Dunkirk in France, Germany began to prepare for an invasion of Britain. In order to cripple its enemy's defences, the Nazis attempted to gain air superiority and in the summer of 1940 launched attacks on shipping and coastal targets on Britain's southern coast, before specifically targeting the RAF.

But the German High Command's decision on 7 September to focus its aerial attacks on London gave the RAF the time it desperately needed to recover and eventually repel the Luftwaffe. The Nazis' sustained bombing raids on London and other major cities killed thousands and caused widespread damage – but failed to break civilian morale.

All images: © Alamy, © Getty Images, © Shutterstock

CRIME &
PUNISHMENT


OUIS MIDLAND R. R.
8

© Alamy

VICTORIAN U

Discover the gangs that lurked down the dark alleys of 19th century Britain

Written by Dr Michala Hulme

Illustration: Joe Cummings

NDERWORLD

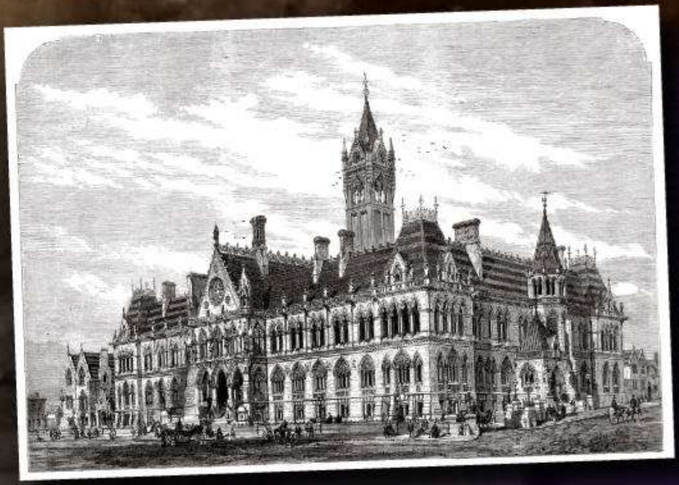
On 23 April 1892, 16-year-old William Willan and his gang were lying in wait for Peter Kennedy, a rival gang member, outside the mill where Kennedy worked. When Kennedy saw them, he tried to escape but was soon chased down by the dozen youths armed with makeshift weapons. Willan was a scuttler, a youth street gang that had terrorised the working-class districts of Manchester and Salford and had tested the governing authorities for over two decades. The name 'scuttlers' was a collective term for these violent ruffians. Individually, the gangs were named after the roads they lived on. Using weapons such as pieces of wood studded with nails, broken bottles, belts and knives, the gangs would fight predominately over territory and girls. ▶

EXPERT BIO

DR MICHALA HULME

Michala is an award-winning historian and genealogist who specialises in the Victorian era. A particular focus is her hometown of Manchester, having authored *A Grim Almanac of Manchester* and *Bloody British History: Manchester*. She has made over 80 media appearances and is currently based at the University of Birmingham.

TOP Twenty-year-old William Brooks was arrested in 1890 and was an alleged member of a Salford scuttling gang



ABOVE In 1892, scuttler William Willan was tried for the murder of Peter Kennedy at the Manchester Assizes. The building was severely damaged during the Blitz and was later demolished

Willan's gang had been embroiled in a bitter feud with a rival outfit for over a month before this confrontation. Some weeks previous, he claimed that he'd been attacked by one of Kennedy's allies, prompting him to now retaliate by stabbing Kennedy in the side. After delivering the mortal blow, Willan wiped the blood off the knife and handed it to an accomplice, and the group fled the scene. Kennedy survived for eight days after the stabbing before succumbing to his injuries, leading to Willan's arrest and subsequent trial.

Willan held the title of King of the Bradford Street Scuttlers — a badge of honour for a scuttler who'd proven himself as a fearless leader and skilled fighter. For these young gang members, loyalty ran deep; they saw each other as family, with a fierce King of Scuttlers at the helm, defending them against rival gangs, the authorities and the police.

Later in 1892, Willan and two associates faced trial for Kennedy's murder at the Manchester Midsummer Assize Courts. Despite his "bitter sobbing" throughout the trial, the jury was unmoved, deliberating for just over an hour before finding him guilty of murder. Willan was sentenced to death, while his two co-defendants were acquitted. As the judge donned his black cap, Willan pleaded desperately: "Oh, master, don't: I'm only 16." His conviction and sentence underscored the brutal reality of gang violence and the authorities' ongoing struggle to loosen the scuttlers' bloody grip on the streets of Manchester.

> With a steady walk to the scaffold, McLean declared his innocence before the executioner released the trapdoor

As soon as the verdict was announced, the family set about trying to get it commuted. They obtained a solicitor and started a petition, gathering over 4,000 signatures.

They succeeded and Willan's death sentence was commuted to penal servitude for life. Eight years after his conviction, the Home Secretary agreed to release him on licence.

One of the earliest recorded scuttler incidents occurred in 1875 when a group of female gang members began terrorising Salford's streets. Despite police efforts - including deploying undercover officers - the attacks only intensified. Between 1888 and the autumn of 1890, the local press documented 42 scuttler cases, highlighting the authorities' growing struggle to control these violent gangs.

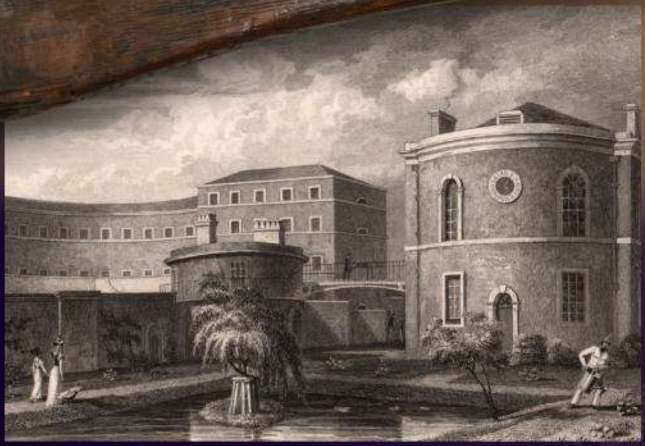
Sentences for those found guilty ranged widely, from two months in prison with a £5 fine for common assault to six months for attacking a police officer, and penal servitude for graver offences like manslaughter. On 5 February 1887, 18-year-old Joseph Brady, a notorious scuttler, was out drinking with two women when a confrontation erupted with a rival gang member. Though their fight was quickly broken up, the tension escalated. Later that night, Brady's adversaries, including a scuttler named Owen Callaghan, stormed into his home and fatally stabbed him. At the ensuing trial, Callaghan was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to 20 years of penal servitude. Yet such lengthy sentences failed to deter scuttler violence. Detective Jerome Caminda, who dedicated much of his career to combating scuttler activities, observed that imprisonment often elevated these criminals to 'hero' status among their peers. Caminda, like many others, called for harsher penalties such as the cat whip. Also known as the cat-o'-nine-tails, it consisted of nine knotted cords, or 'tails', and got its name because it left scars that resembled cat scratches.

While Manchester and Salford were grappling with the scuttlers, Liverpool was in the midst of its own battle with a group the newspapers called the High Rip Gang. This gang, which operated in the Vauxhall area of the city during the 1880s, was arguably even more brutal and calculated than the scuttlers in its modus operandi.

The High Rip Gang's first reported leader was 17-year-old Michael McLean, and in 1884 he and his crew faced charges for a brutal, unprovoked assault on 24-year-old Spanish sailor Exequiel Rodriguez Nunez. On a chilly January night, shortly after ten o'clock, Nunez was making his way back to his ship when McLean and four accomplices ambushed him. They kicked him to the ground and struck him repeatedly with

RIGHT By the end of the 19th century, the cat whip was frequently used to punish those convicted of illegal gang-related activities

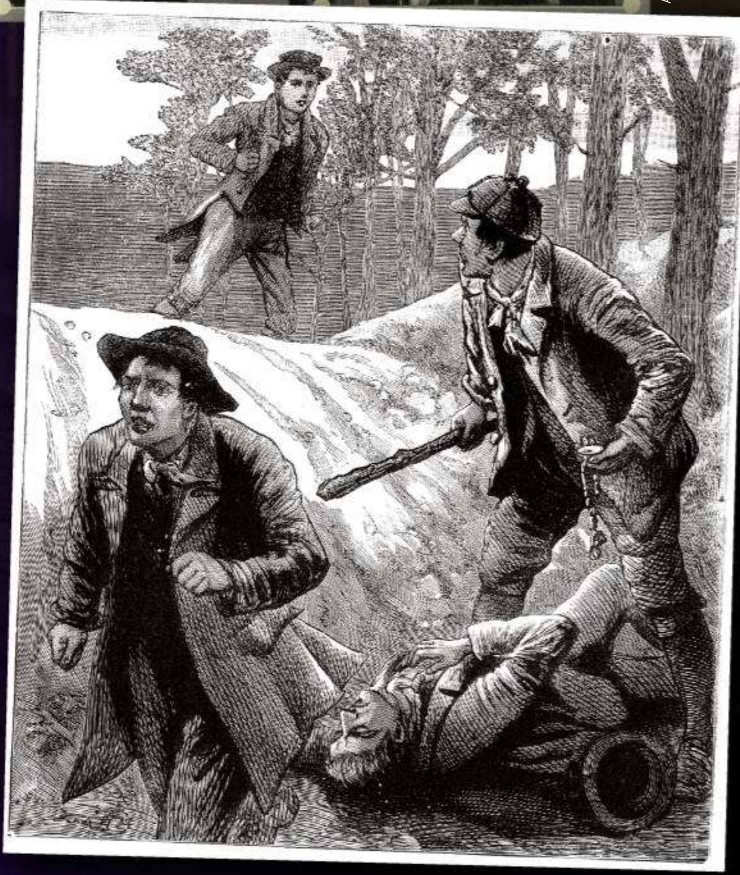
BELOW LEFT An early image of Kirkdale Jail, where Michael McLean was executed in 1884 for the brutal murder of Exequiel Rodriguez Nunez



DOG MARKET, CLUB ROW.

FAR RIGHT Club Row Market in Spitalfields, East London, c.1910. It was notorious for gang-related crime

BOTTOM RIGHT Assaults and violent robberies were commonplace in Victorian England



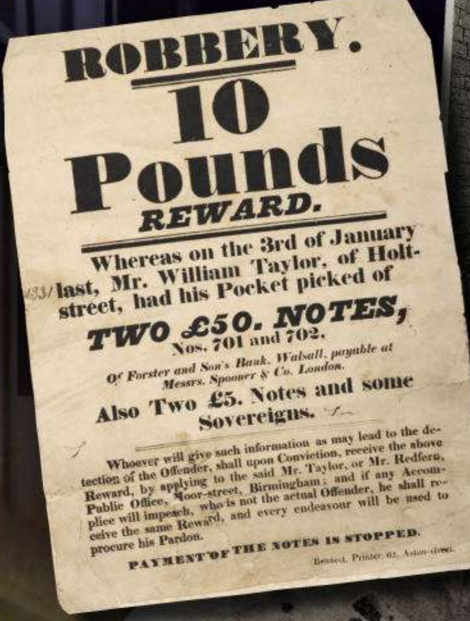
All images: © Alamy, © Getty Images

belts. Although Nunez fought to his feet and tried to escape, he was ultimately caught. In a horrific turn of events, McLean and a fellow assailant named Duggan stabbed Nunez three times. One blow severed an artery near his neck, leaving him fatally injured.

McLean and his gang showed no regard for gender in their violent assaults, and they displayed a blatant fearlessness toward the police. During one notorious incident, while being arrested for attacking a female rent collector and stealing her bag of money, McLean stabbed a police officer with such ferocity that the blade sliced through his arm to the bone. This act underscored the gang's ruthless disregard for those in authority.

McLean and his accomplices were eventually arrested for the murder of Nunez. Of the five men indicted, only McLean and Duggan faced trial, and after a lengthy hearing both were found guilty and sentenced to death by hanging. While Duggan later received a reprieve, the Home Secretary saw no grounds for reducing McLean's sentence and he was executed at Kirkdale Gaol on 10 March 1884. Since 1868, executions had been conducted in private, yet the press eagerly reported the details. They noted that McLean "walked firmly to the scaffold", where he delivered a brief speech proclaiming his innocence. The executioner then strapped his legs, adjusted his white cap and released the trapdoor. McLean fell three metres to his death, dying instantaneously on the noose.

Following the execution, petitions flooded into the Home Secretary's office after shocking revelations surfaced regarding the hangman, Mr Binns. It was disclosed that he had arrived at the gaol in an "incapacitated" state. The prison governor confirmed that the executioner was indeed drunk when he reached the prison, yet he still managed to carry out the execution "fairly satisfactorily". This troubling information sparked outrage and raised serious questions about the integrity of the execution process. ▶



ROBBERY.

10 Pounds

REWARD.

Whereas on the 3rd of January 831/ last, Mr. William Taylor, of Holt-street, had his Pocket picked of

TWO £50. NOTES,

Nos. 701 and 702.

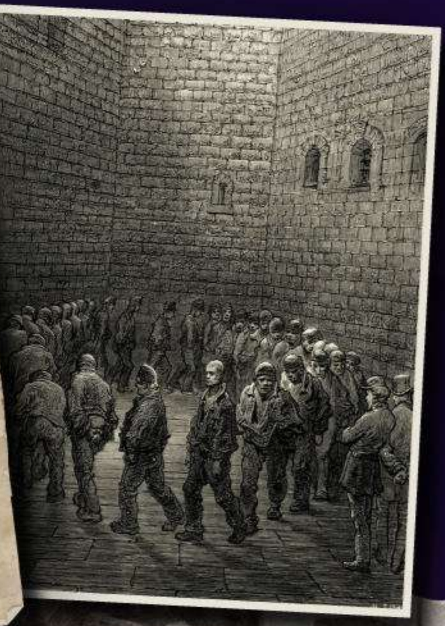
Of Forster and Son's Bank, Walsall, payable at Messrs. Spooner & Co. London.

Also Two £5. Notes and some Sovereigns.

Whoever will give such information as may lead to the detection of the Offender, shall upon Conviction, receive the above Reward, by applying to the said Mr. Taylor, or Mr. Redfern, Public Office, Moor-street, Birmingham; and if any Accomplice will impeach, who is not the actual Offender, he shall receive the same Reward, and every endeavour will be used to procure his Pardon.

PAYMENT OF THE NOTES IS STOPPED.

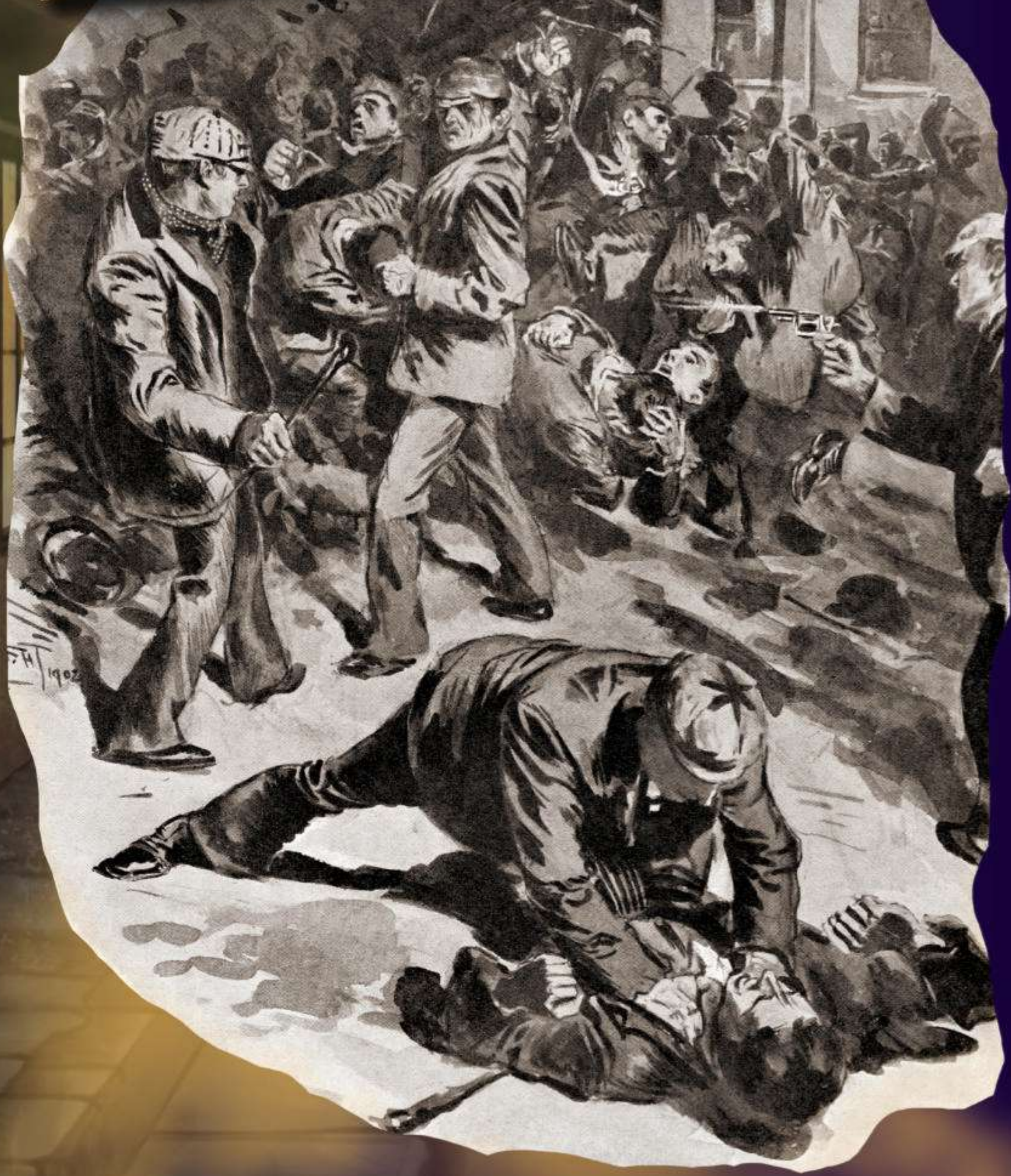
Bennett, Printer, 62, Aston-street.



FAR LEFT A reward poster looking for pickpockets who'd robbed one William Taylor in Birmingham

LEFT An 1872 engraving of prisoners in Newgate, London, by Gustave Doré

BELOW Gang warfare in London provided plenty of material for the newspapers



All images: © Alamy, © Getty Images

While the near execution of Willan instilled a sense of dread among scuttlers, stoking fears that they could face the scaffold, the execution of McLean had little impact on the criminal activities of Liverpool's gangs. In fact, it did nothing to deter young boys from seeking membership in the violent posse. A local employer reported that several dockworkers had informed their foreman of their intentions to quit and join the High Rip Gang, and the group's notoriety grew thanks to its ongoing involvement in a wide range of crimes such as stabbings, blackmail, housebreaking and highway robberies. Like the scuttlers, the High Rip Gang also included women, who often served as scouts and decoys for their male counterparts. No one appeared to be safe from the gang's reach – they stole from their neighbours and attacked women, underscoring their brazen disregard for their community.

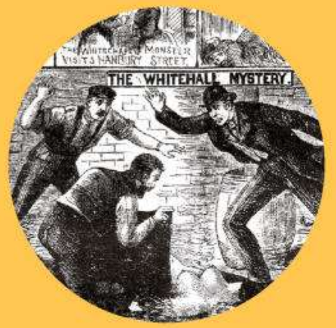
The true extent of their crimes will never be known because the vast majority went unreported, largely because the public feared retaliation for speaking to the police. And local press reports alleged that many officers had been removed from their beats due to threats to their lives, highlighting the pervasive atmosphere of intimidation and lawlessness that gripped the city.

By the 1890s, reports of High Rip crimes in Liverpool had nearly vanished, and it would take another decade for scuttler activity to similarly decline. A combination of harsher sentences for those convicted, the establishment of new playing fields and the formation of youth organisations such as the Boys' Brigade, Scouts and boxing clubs created positive outlets for young people to channel their energy. These initiatives played a crucial role in curbing gang activity, ultimately leading to the decline of these violent groups.

Birmingham, however, tells a different tale. At the dawn of the 20th century the city was still grappling with ruthlessly violent street gangs. For the past 30 years Birmingham had been plagued by violent working-class youth groups known as 'slogging gangs', a term derived from the word 'slogger', which described someone who hit hard. By 1895, these slogging gangs had begun to be referred to as Peaky Blinders. Collectively known as the Peakies, they would rise to become one of the most notorious street gangs in England, leaving a lasting mark on the city's history.

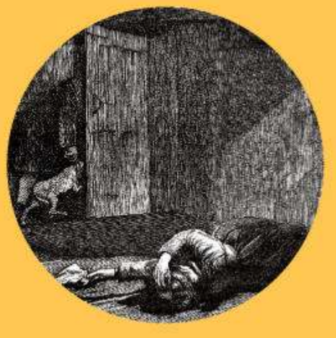
UNSOLVED MURDERS

It wasn't just gangs who were a danger in 19th century Britain...



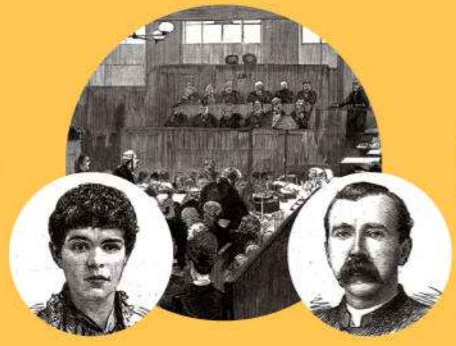
THAMES TORSO MURDERS

Between 1887 and 1889 (although the killings may have started earlier), the remains of at least four women were pulled from the River Thames in London. The bodies had been dismembered, with other parts found around the city. Only one of the victims was identified – Elizabeth Jackson – who was pregnant at the time of her death. Police investigating the murders believed the perpetrator had medical knowledge, but no one was ever caught.



ELIZA GRIMWOOD MURDER

The brutal murder of Eliza Grimwood left a lasting impression on those who learned of it, not least author Charles Dickens. Grimwood's body was found on 26 May 1838 in her home in Wellington Terrace, London. She had suffered multiple stab wounds and her throat had been cut, with blood reportedly covering the walls. Dickens was a crime reporter at the time and drew on the scene in *Oliver Twist* for the murder of Nancy by Bill Sikes. Grimwood's killer was never found.



THE PIMLICO MYSTERY

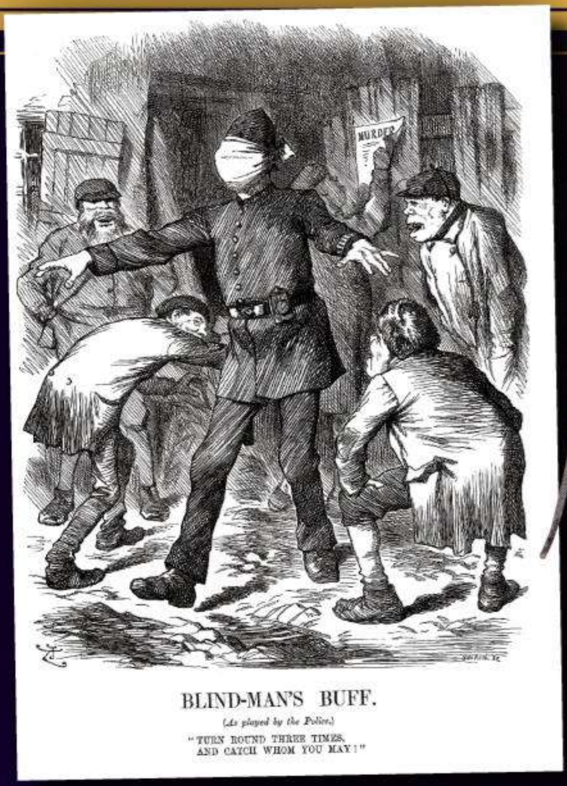
On 31 December 1885 Edwin Bartlett died, and the autopsy revealed there was chloroform in his stomach. The prime suspects were his wife Adelaide Bartlett and Reverend George Dyson, the man she had started an affair with and who had recently purchased chloroform. But their trial saw them acquitted of murder, with suicide suggested as the cause of demise. The *British Medical Journal* re-examined the case in 1994 but was unable to shed further light on the death.

CHARLES BRAVO MURDER

The mysterious death of Charles Bravo in 1876 baffled the police and medical experts. Bravo, who was in good health, began to slowly wither away and within weeks he was dead. His cause of death was attributed to a chemical called antimony, which can be toxic and acts similarly to arsenic. He may have been poisoned deliberately but conclusive proof was never found. Crime writer Agatha Christie studied the case years later, but was unable to solve the mystery.

Each gang sported a distinct style that set them apart. The High Rips donned their signature Bucko caps, while the scuttlers were known for their bell-bottomed trousers, leather belts that doubled as weapons, and narrow-pointed clogs with cut-out patterns on the toes. The Peakies distinguished themselves with their iconic caps, perched over one eye, complemented by a "carefully trained curl of hair" over the other. They also wore neckerchiefs and, like the scuttlers, embraced large bell-bottomed trousers. The name Peakies originated from their headwear – a peaked cap that, according to folklore, concealed a razor which was wielded against their enemies.

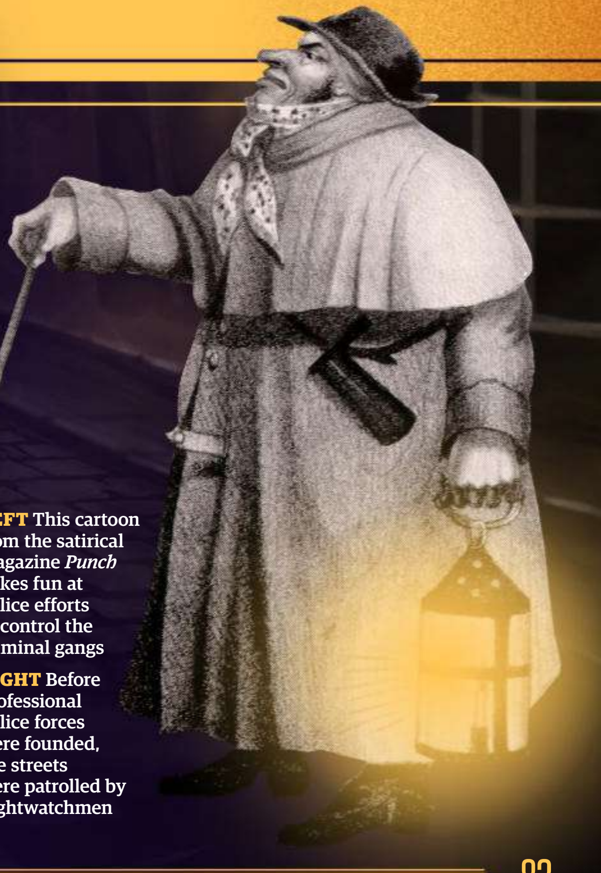
In their early days these gangs gained notoriety for housebreaking, petty theft, assaults and violent robberies. More organised and ambitious factions also engaged in protection ▶



BLIND-MAN'S BUFF.

(As played by the Police.)

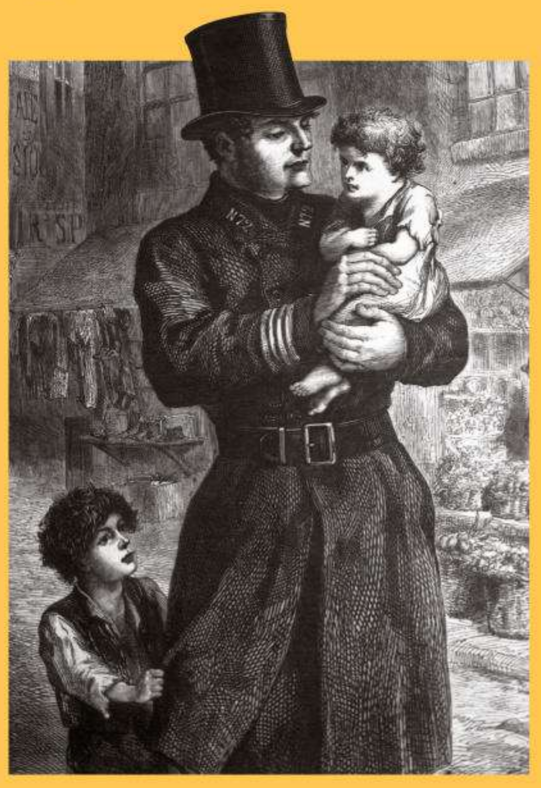
"TURN ROUND THREE TIMES, AND CATCH WHOM YOU MAY!"



LEFT This cartoon from the satirical magazine *Punch* pokes fun at police efforts to control the criminal gangs

RIGHT Before professional police forces were founded, the streets were patrolled by nightwatchmen

BIRTH OF THE 'BOBBIES'



One man's groundbreaking reforms heralded a new age of criminal justice

Sir Robert Peel became Home Secretary of the United Kingdom in 1822 and set about trying to bring the country's soaring crime rate under control. A fully professional police force was repeatedly proposed, but there was significant opposition to the idea. Many feared that a state-controlled law-enforcement body would be used to force people into compliance with the government's wishes. There were also concerns that maintaining such an organisation would result in higher taxes.

Despite this, the Metropolitan Police Act was passed in 1829, creating the Metropolitan Police in London with an initial 3,200 men hired and trained as policemen. They were referred to as Peelers or Bobbies after Robert Peel, and the latter moniker is still in common usage today. After some initial success, further reforms were passed to expand the force in London and empower the creation of similar organisations across the country. By 1851 there were 13,000 police officers in England and Wales, and the 1856 County and Borough Police Act made full-time professional police forces mandatory.

rackets, extorting money from local businesses in exchange for safety and security. Failure to comply often resulted in brutal reprisals, including attacks on the business premises or, in some cases, assaults on the owners themselves. In 1939, legendary circus showman Pat Collins recounted his own experience with the Peaky Blinders, revealing that they had threatened him, demanding payment to avoid having his stalls attacked. Contrary to popular belief that he dealt with them using a knuckleduster, Collins said that he never resorted to violence. Instead, he enlisted undercover police officers to monitor his fairs and suppress any gang-related activity.

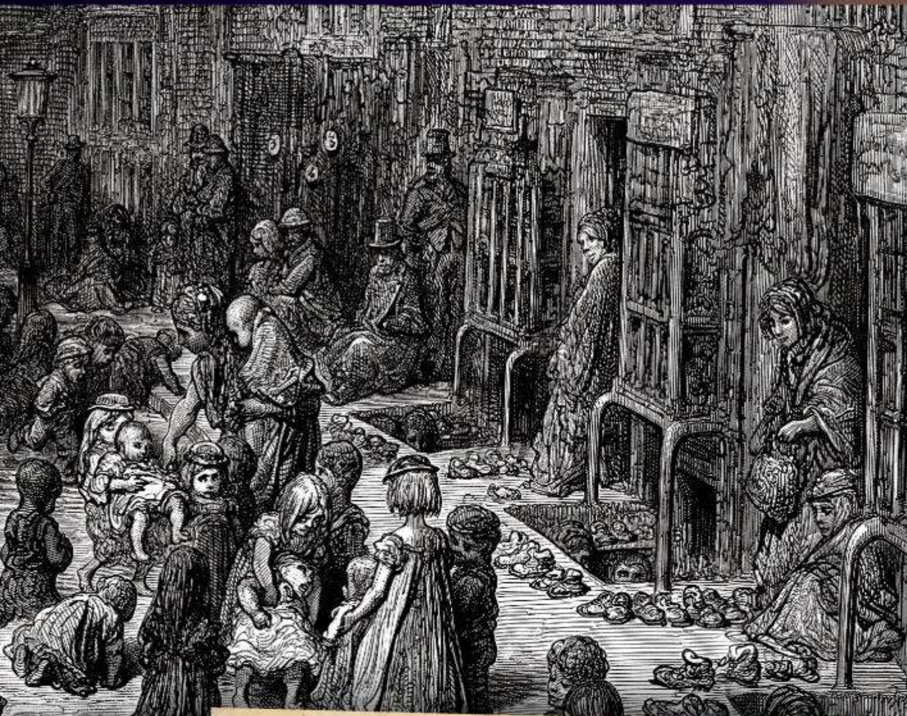
Although Collins sought the protection of the police, it's important to note that the Peaky Blinders had a notorious history of attacking law enforcement officers. One infamous member, Thomas Walters, was sentenced to five years of penal servitude for stabbing a police constable in the back after being ejected from a theatre. In 1901, gang members Joseph Adey, John Davis and George Fowler received sentences of 15 years of penal servitude for the manslaughter of Constable Gunter. The trio brutally assaulted him with bricks, one of which struck him on the forehead, and tragically Gunter succumbed to his injuries three months later, underscoring the violent nature of the gang and their willingness to confront authority.

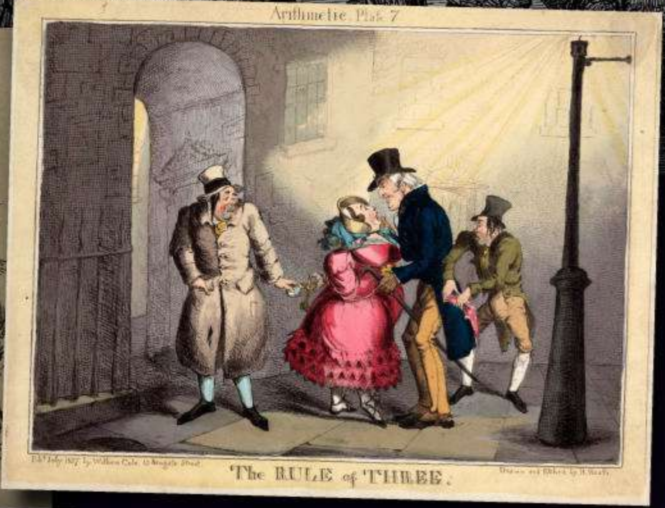
As Adey, Davis and Fowler began their lengthy prison sentences, one of Britain's most infamous crime bosses was wrapping up his own. William 'Billy' Kimber, portrayed as Thomas Shelby's rival in the BBC show *Peaky Blinders*, had just completed a two-month sentence for assaulting a police officer. By 1904, Kimber had amassed a troubling record of convictions that included theft, shopbreaking, assault, gaming offences and public drunkenness. His notorious reputation and criminal exploits solidified his status within the underworld, making him a significant figure in the history of gang crime in Birmingham.

Born in Birmingham in 1882, Kimber was the son of William Kimber and Catherine Farrell. Along with his brothers Joseph, Harry and George, he was on the wrong side of the law from a young age. Starting with petty crimes, Kimber eventually gained national notoriety as the leader of the

ABOVE As racegoers enjoyed their day, organised criminal gangs employed pickpockets to work their way through the crowds, stealing money and valuables

All images: © Alamy, © Getty Images

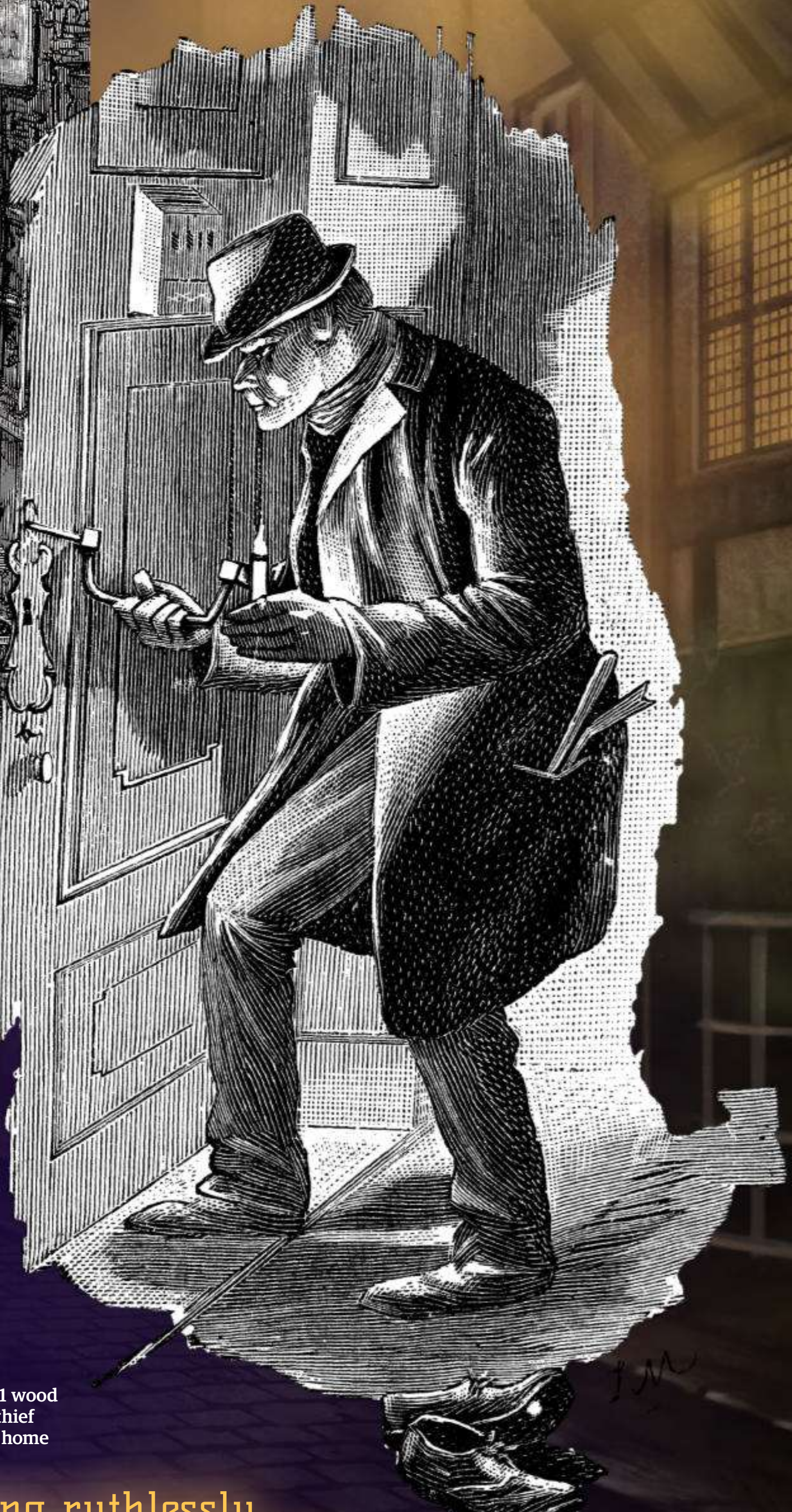




LEFT Turning to crime was not uncommon in the industrial slums

MIDDLE LEFT A gamekeeper chasing poachers off his land

MIDDLE RIGHT This satirical cartoon from 1827 shows pickpockets working in tandem to steal from a gentleman

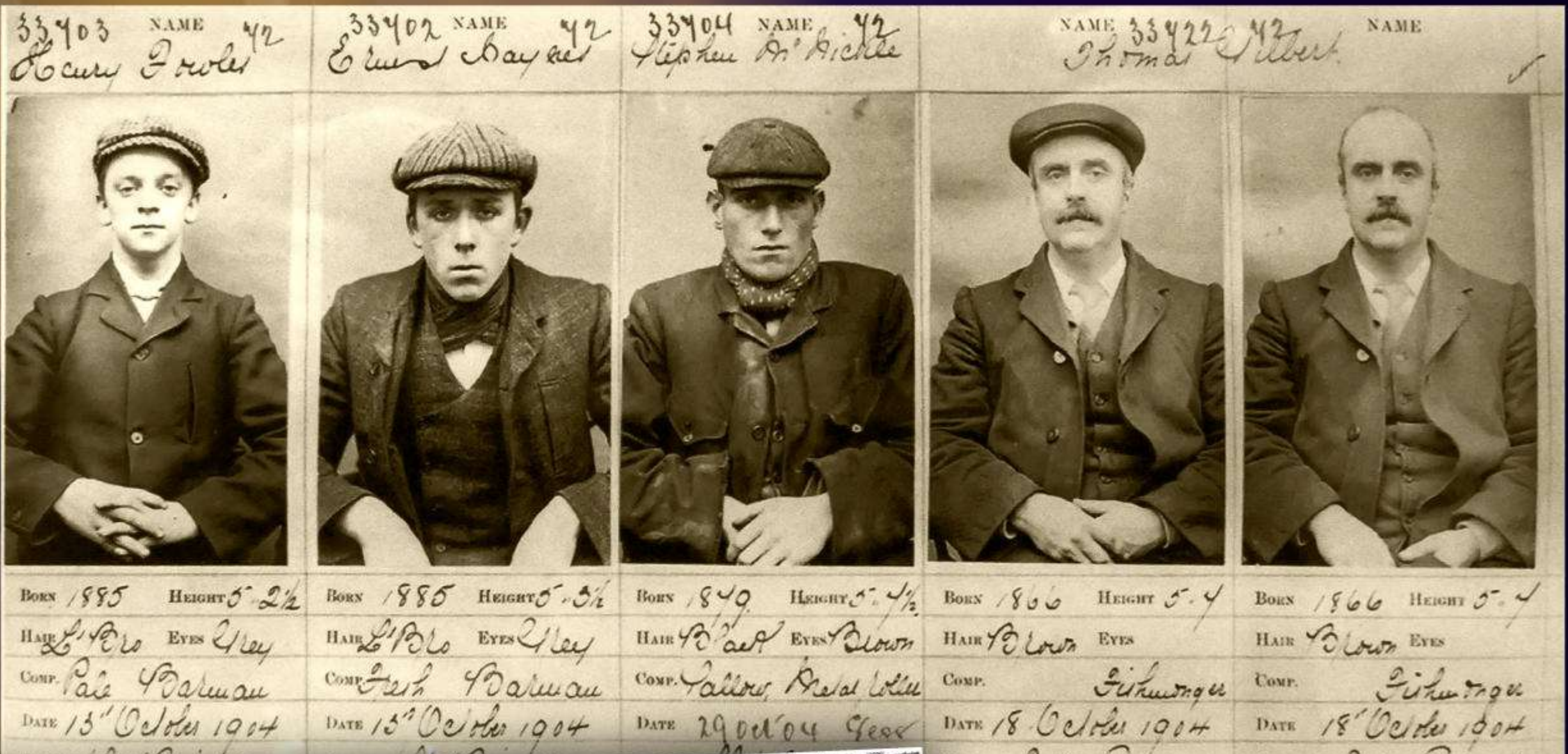


ABOVE An 1891 wood engraving of a thief breaking into a home

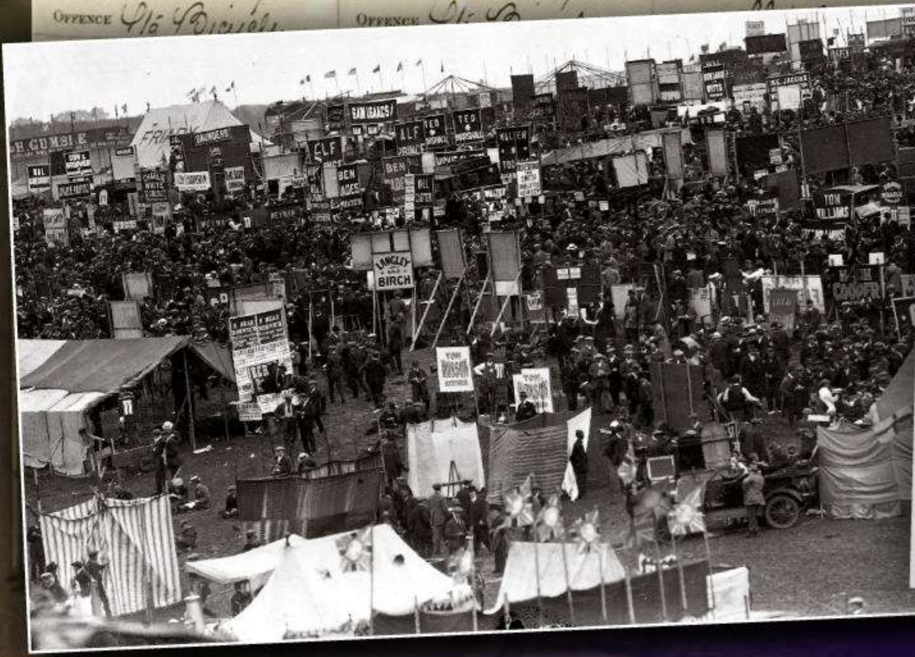
Birmingham Boys, a notorious crime gang that operated at racecourses across the country. His ability to manipulate the world of gambling and his audacious tactics solidified his reputation as a formidable figure in the criminal underworld.

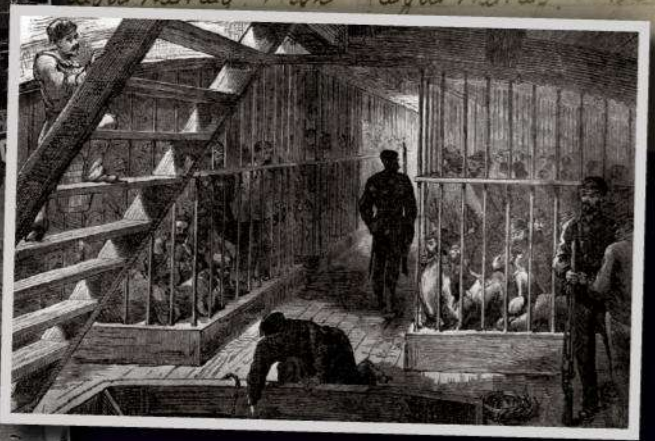
At the time, racecourses presented an easy and profitable target for gangs. With substantial amounts of money exchanging hands, largely unregulated gambling and minimal police oversight, these venues became a magnet for the criminal underworld. Kimber and his brothers began their racecourse schemes by stealing winning betting tickets and cashing them in. However, it wasn't long before they expanded their operations to include illegal betting, protection rackets and ▶

> The gang ruthlessly attacked him with bricks, one striking his forehead – Constable Gunter succumbed to his injuries months later



33403 NAME 42 Henry Fowler	33402 NAME 42 Ernest Bayles	33404 NAME 42 Stephen McHickie	NAME 33422 42 Thomas Gilbert	NAME
Born 1885 Height 5' 2½	Born 1885 Height 5' 3½	Born 1879 Height 5' 4½	Born 1866 Height 5' 4	Born 1866 Height 5' 4
Hair L' Bro Eyes Grey	Hair L' Bro Eyes Grey	Hair Black Eyes Brown	Hair Brown Eyes	Hair Brown Eyes
Comp. Pale Barman	Comp. Fresh Barman	Comp. Sallow, Metal Roller	Comp. Fishmonger	Comp. Fishmonger
Date 13th October 1904	Date 13th October 1904	Date 29 Oct '04 [illegible]	Date 18 October 1904	Date 18th October 1904
Offence Stg Bicycle	Offence [illegible]		Offence False Pretences	Offence False Pretences
			Result 3 months	Result 3 months
			Marks: 2nd 3rd & 4th left	Marks: 2nd 3rd & 4th left
			fingers missing. Right	fingers missing. Right





TOP The original Peaky Blinders: mug shots taken during WWI show the men wearing their signature peaked caps and neck scarves

ABOVE By the 1920s, gangs like the Sabinis and the Birmingham Boys were using racecourse meetings as prime grounds to dominate the bookmaking trade

ABOVE RIGHT Convicts on a ship bound for Australia. Between 1788 and 1868 about 162,000 prisoners were sent to the penal colonies

> The rivalry had now ignited into a full-blown war, as 300 Sabini men faced off against the Birmingham Boys

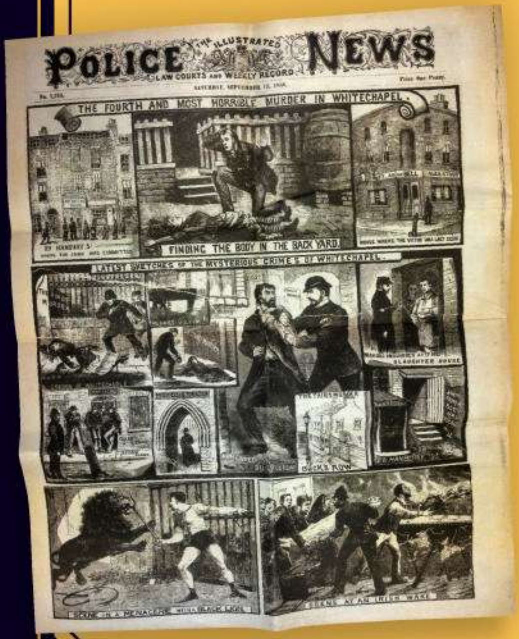
organised pickpocketing rings. Their pickpockets expertly navigated the bustling crowds, targeting the cash and valuables of wealthy racegoers, turning the racecourse into a lucrative playground for Kimber's expanding criminal empire.

During the interwar years, racecourses became hotspots for fierce gang rivalries. While most gangs kept to racecourses within their own districts, ambitious leaders like Kimber sought to expand beyond the West Midlands. After the First World War, his gang established a strong presence at racecourses in London and across southern England. However, these venues were also prime territory for gang leader Charles 'Darby' Sabini and his brothers, who ran a London-based outfit of Italian origin. Among the Sabinis' key associates was Alfred Solomons, a Covent Garden fruit salesman later portrayed by Tom Hardy in *Peaky Blinders*. The bitter rivalry between Kimber and the Sabinis would become legendary, setting the stage for a brutal power struggle over control of these lucrative racecourse operations.

One of the early clashes between the rival gangs erupted at Greenford Park races in London. Darby Sabini, feeling that Kimber's men were taking liberties, confronted them with a gun, issuing a clear threat. Tensions escalated, and at a later meeting in Plumpton over 300 members of the Sabini gang faced off against the Birmingham Boys, seeking vengeance. The violent confrontation left several injured, though, remarkably, no one was killed. However, the message was

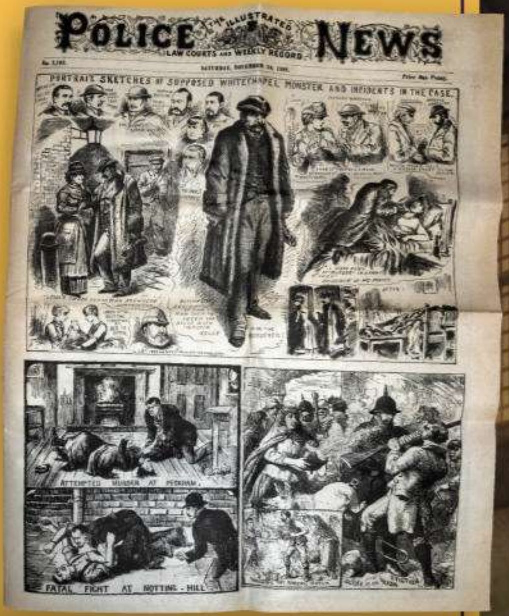
POLICE NEWS

The Victorians loved their trashy tabloids too


POLICE THE ILLUSTRATED NEWS
LAW COURTS AND WEEKLY RECORD
THE FOURTH AND MOST HORRIBLE MURDER IN WHITECHAPEL
FINDING THE BODY IN THE BACK YARD
LATEST SKETCHES OF THE MYSTERIOUS CRIMES OF WHITECHAPEL
SCENE IN A MENAGERIE WITH A BLACK LION
SCENE AT AN IRISH WAKE

If you thought modern tabloid newspapers and cheap magazines crammed with murder and mischief were a modern phenomenon, think again. Some of the images you see in this feature came from a 19th century publication called *The Illustrated Police News* – a popular weekly newspaper promising scandalous stories with salacious images to match. It was first published in 1864 and entertained its readers with graphic reports on the latest crimes, accidents and tragedies, and the police investigations into them.

The Illustrated Police News was founded by London publisher George Purkess and drew its stories from the London law courts, as well as sourcing juicy tales from elsewhere in the country. For maximum dramatic effect, the lead stories were recreated on the front page by a team of illustrators. After newspaper taxes were abolished in 1861, Purkess began printing it as an affordable four-page penny edition, expanded to 12 pages in 1897, and it went on to include celebrity scandals, reviews and sport. Wildly popular with a public hungry for cheap entertainment, it was published until 1938.


POLICE THE ILLUSTRATED NEWS
LAW COURTS AND WEEKLY RECORD
PORTRAIT SKETCHES OF SUPPOSED WHITECHAPEL MONSTER AND INCIDENTS IN THE CASE.
ATTEMPTED MURDER AT PECKHAM.
FATAL FIGHT AT NOTTING - HILL

clear: the rivalry had now ignited into a full-blown war.

In an effort to defuse the brewing war, Kimber agreed to a meeting at Darby Sabini's house, with Solomons also in attendance. As the men drank, tensions flared and heated words quickly escalated into a fight. Later that night, a police officer found Kimber lying unconscious on a road in Kings Cross. He was rushed to hospital, where doctors discovered he had been shot, with a bullet lodged just below his left lung. The following day, Solomons turned himself in at the local police station, claiming he had shot Kimber "by accident". According to Solomons, the gun had gone off as they struggled during the fight, with Solomons attempting to seize Kimber's weapon.

At the subsequent trial, Kimber adhered to the gangster code, refusing to aid the police by confirming that Solomons was the shooter. Instead, he insisted he hadn't seen the assailant's face. Kimber did, however, take the opportunity to denounce the use of guns, declaring them tools for "cowards" and saying he'd "rather blow out my own brains than use one on anyone." Kimber's refusal to testify was one of the factors that led to Solomons' acquittal.

In 1924, however, the 32-year-old Solomons faced court again, this time charged with the unlawful killing of Barney Blitz, a bookmaker's runner for the Birmingham gang, at the Eden Club. In a show of solidarity, the Jewish community funded his defence. Solomons was ultimately found guilty of manslaughter and received a sentence of three years' penal servitude.

By the late 1920s, Kimber's influence was in decline as rival gangs began to dominate the criminal landscape. Moving his family to the southwest coast of England, he stepped away from gang life and eventually passed away in 1942 at the age of 60.

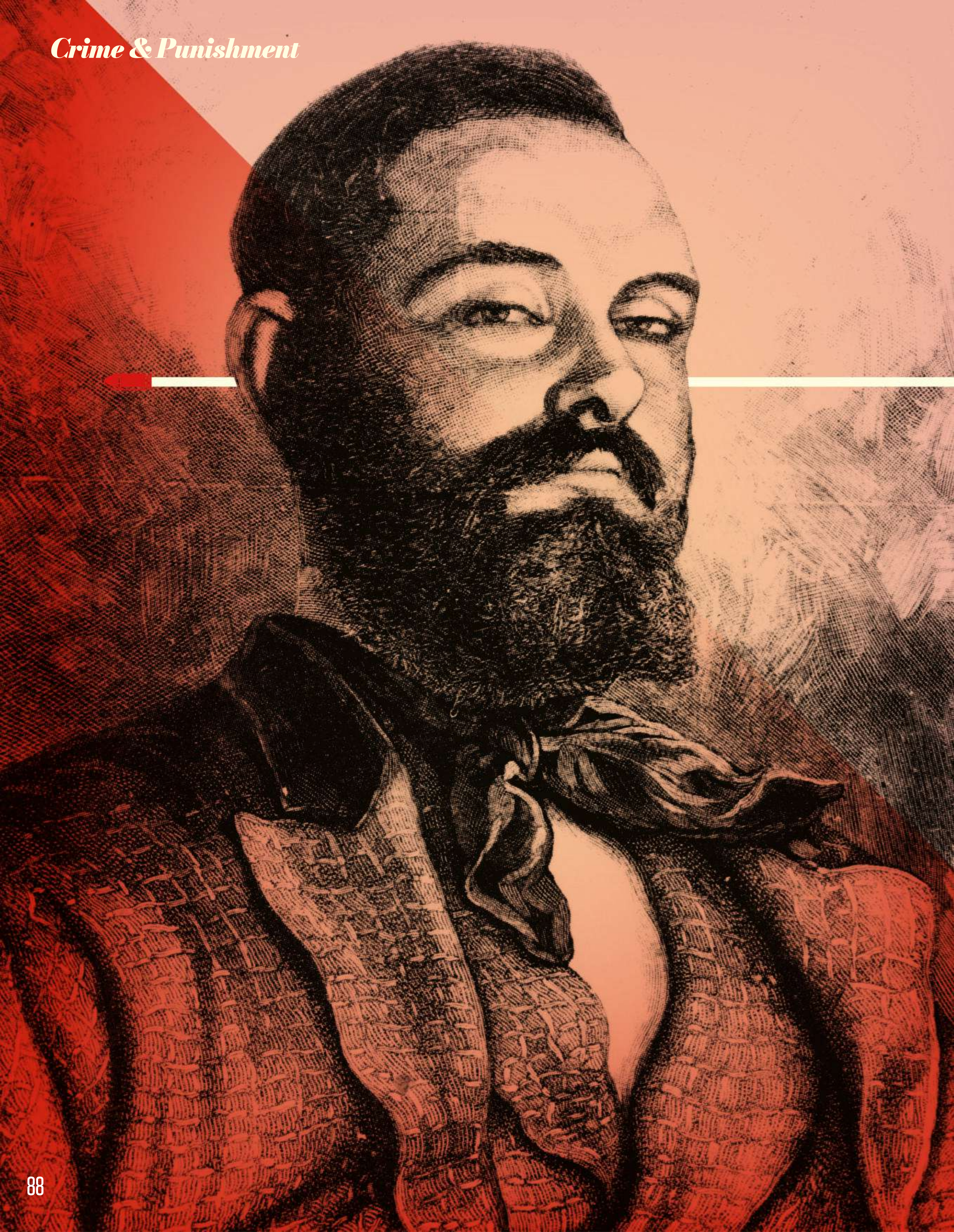
The Sabini gang, meanwhile, maintained ruthless control of their criminal activities throughout the 1930s. However, with the onset of the Second World War in 1939, Darby Sabini and other Italian members of the gang were interned as 'enemy aliens', dealing a significant blow to their power. By the war's end in 1945, new criminal groups had seized control and the Sabinis' influence had all but faded away. Darby Sabini lived quietly after his release, passing away in 1950. The fall of both Kimber and the Sabinis marked the end of a bloody era in Britain's gang history, their once-powerful empires overtaken by rival criminal factions.

ABOVE Officers from the Wolverhampton Borough Police Force, pictured in 1900

FURTHER READING
SUBSCRIBER EXCLUSIVE
Read more about Victorian life in issue 128 via our digital archive
SCAN HERE

ALL ABOUT HISTORY
REBEL MINDS
VICTORIAN MEDICINE
BOMBER WHO FOOLED THE NAZIS

All images: © Alamy; © Getty Images



JESSE JAMES

AMERICA'S ORIGINAL GANGSTER

Fearless outlaw and Confederate guerrilla, Jesse James was a political icon until the ultimate betrayal brought about his assassination

Written by Tanita Matthews

Jesse Woodson James was born in Clay County, Missouri, on 5 September 1847, to Zerelda Elizabeth Cole and Robert James, a preacher and hemp farmer. The middle child of three, born to his Kentucky-native parents, he grew up in a small three-bedroom cabin in 'Little Dixie', an area in Western Missouri now known as Clay County. The vast plains on the Missouri River provided ample economic prospects for hemp and tobacco farmers selling supplies to passing merchants, who funnelled into the region to seek cotton farms and workers. Robert James was also a respected preacher at New Hope Baptist Church, and founded William Jewell College in Liberty, Missouri, in 1849. The family kept six slaves – five young children aged two to 11 and a woman aged 30.

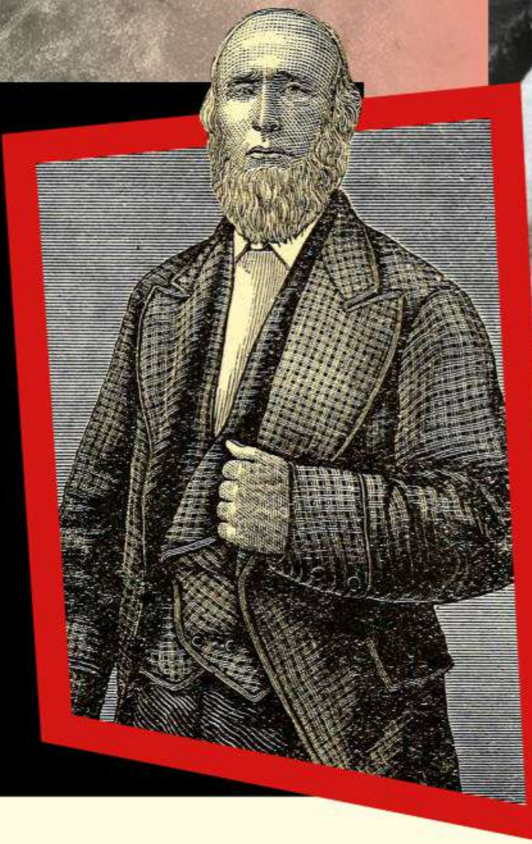
The 1850 Gold Rush drew many fortune-seekers out west, including Robert, who left his family for California in April 1850. He died in August of cholera, leaving Zerelda

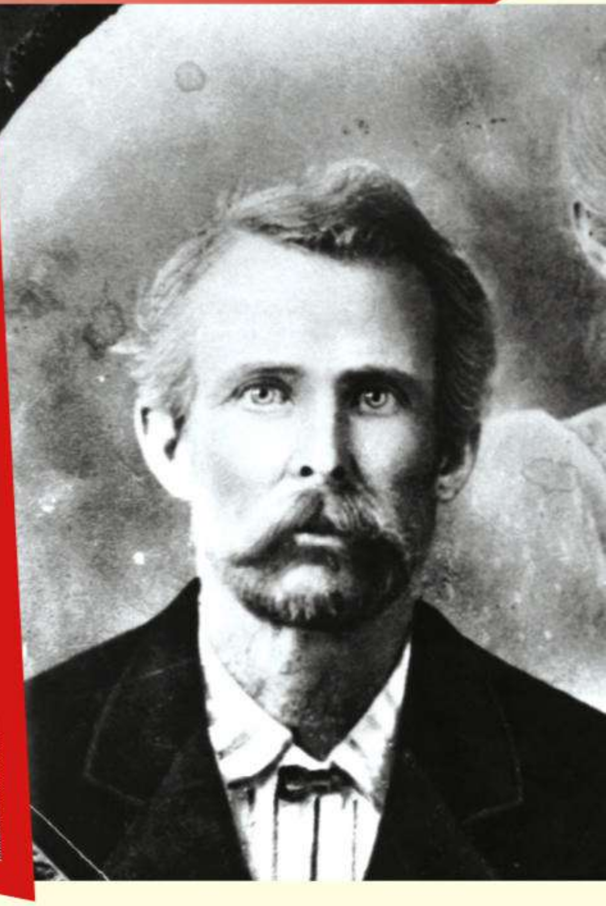
© Alamy

A SECRET SIBLING?

Records indicate that the James brothers' stepfather may have fathered a child with a slave

According to official records, Dr Reuben Samuel may have fathered a child outside of his marriage to Zerelda. Handwritten census records of the James-Samuel household from the late 1800s show a young boy, by the name of Perry Samuel, born three years after the end of the Civil War. His mother is listed as Charlotte Samuel, the eldest of the family's slaves, and his race is listed as "MU", an abbreviation meaning 'mulatto', a term used at the time to indicate a person of mixed race. If Perry's father was indeed the man who enslaved his mother, it would make him a step-brother to the James brothers.

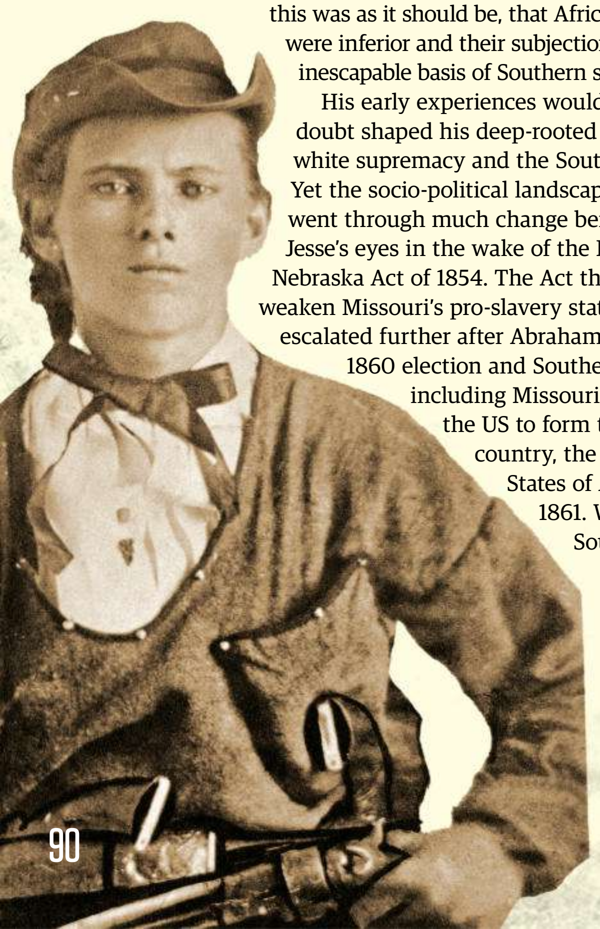




widowed at 25 with three young children and a precarious hold on their farm. Zerelda re-married in September 1852 to Benjamin Simms, a wealthy farmer twice her age who owned lands in Clay County, but the pair separated in 1853. Simms subsequently died in early 1854. On 12 September 1855 Zerelda married a timid country doctor, Dr Reuben Samuel. Together they would have four children together: Sarah Louisa, John Thomas, Fannie Quantrell and Archie Peyton Samuel.

Historian and author TJ Stiles in his book *Jesse James: Last Rebel of the Civil War* notes that Jesse James' upbringing in a pro-slavery household meant that "he learned from infancy that all this was as it should be, that African Americans were inferior and their subjection was the inescapable basis of Southern society".

His early experiences would have no doubt shaped his deep-rooted belief in white supremacy and the Southern cause. Yet the socio-political landscape of Missouri went through much change before young Jesse's eyes in the wake of the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. The Act threatened to weaken Missouri's pro-slavery status. Tensions escalated further after Abraham Lincoln's 1860 election and Southern states including Missouri seceded the US to form their own country, the Confederate States of America, in 1861. While the Southern states claimed to be protecting their way of life, the North viewed this move as an act of rebellion leading to violence on the Missouri-Kansas border. When Confederate troops attacked Fort Sumter in South Carolina on 12 April 1861, the Civil War officially began.

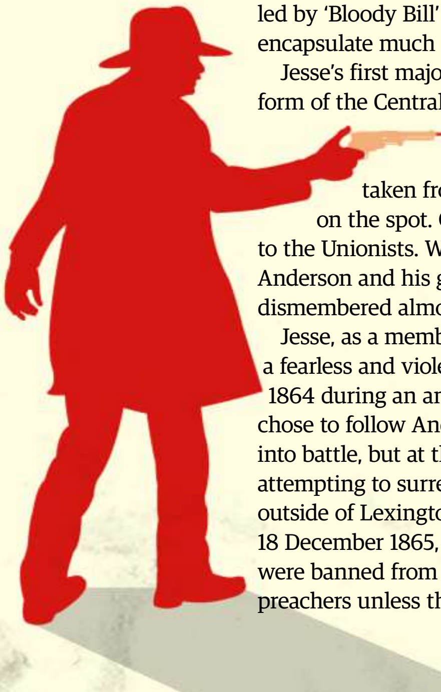


LEFT Jesse James' legacy is one controversy and mixed ideals: outlaw, freedom fighter, murderer and much-loved son

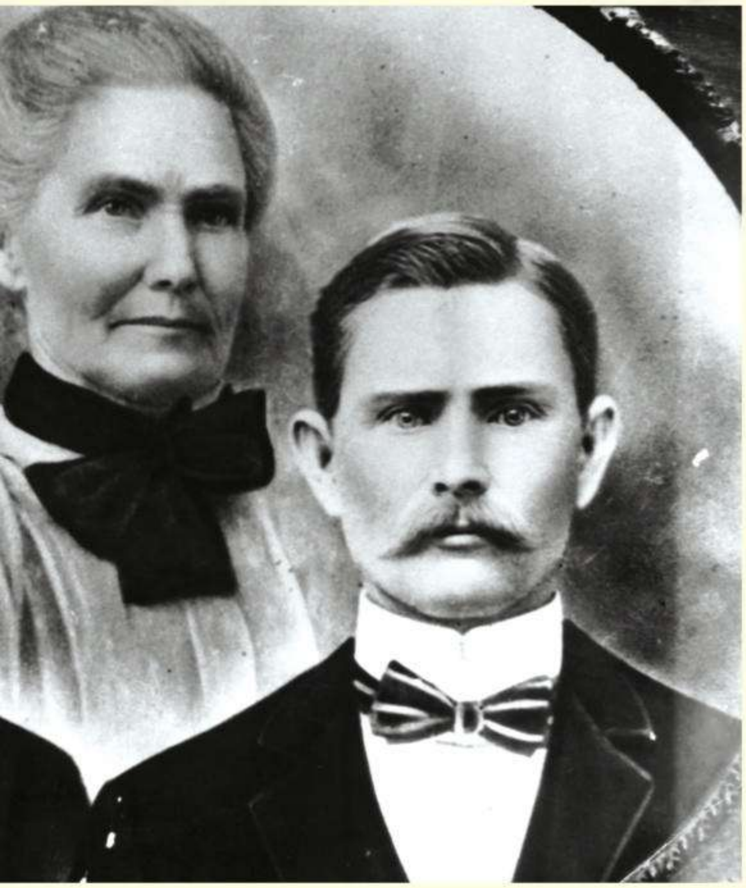
> "JESSE, AS A MEMBER OF ANDERSON'S GROUP, EARNED A REPUTATION AS A FEARLESS AND VIOLENT WARRIOR"

Jesse's formative years would have been spent witnessing the guerrilla warfare that gripped Missouri. Secessionist 'bushwhackers' fought with Union forces, which largely consisted of local militias known as 'jayhawkers'. Jesse's older brother Frank joined pro-Confederate guerillas, following the command of William Clarke Quantrill. One evening the opposition, looking for information on Frank's whereabouts, attacked and tortured Jesse's stepfather. Jesse, a young boy at the time, is also alleged to have been assaulted in the attack. In the spring of 1864, 16-year-old Jesse, following in his brother's footsteps, joined a guerrilla group led by 'Bloody Bill' Anderson. It would be a decision that would encapsulate much of his life and legacy.

Jesse's first major test as a Confederate soldier came in the form of the Centralia Massacre on 27 September 1864. Reports state that 22 unarmed Union soldiers were taken from a train by Anderson's group and executed on the spot. One teenager was spared, who took word back to the Unionists. When 150 men on horseback tried to attack, Anderson and his group were ready and slaughtered, scalped and dismembered almost every soldier. Few survived.



Jesse, as a member of Anderson's group, earned a reputation as a fearless and violent warrior. Anderson was shot dead in October 1864 during an ambush by pro-Unionist guerilla soldiers. Jesse chose to follow Anderson's lieutenant, Archie Clement, back into battle, but at the age of 17 he was shot in the chest while attempting to surrender following a run-in with a Union patrol outside of Lexington. While he recovered, the Civil War ended on 18 December 1865, officially abolishing slavery. Ex-Confederates were banned from voting, holding office or working as teachers or preachers unless they swore loyalty to the Union.



LEFT Zerelda James supported her sons Frank and Jesse tirelessly throughout their days as outlaws, telling people "no mother ever had better sons"

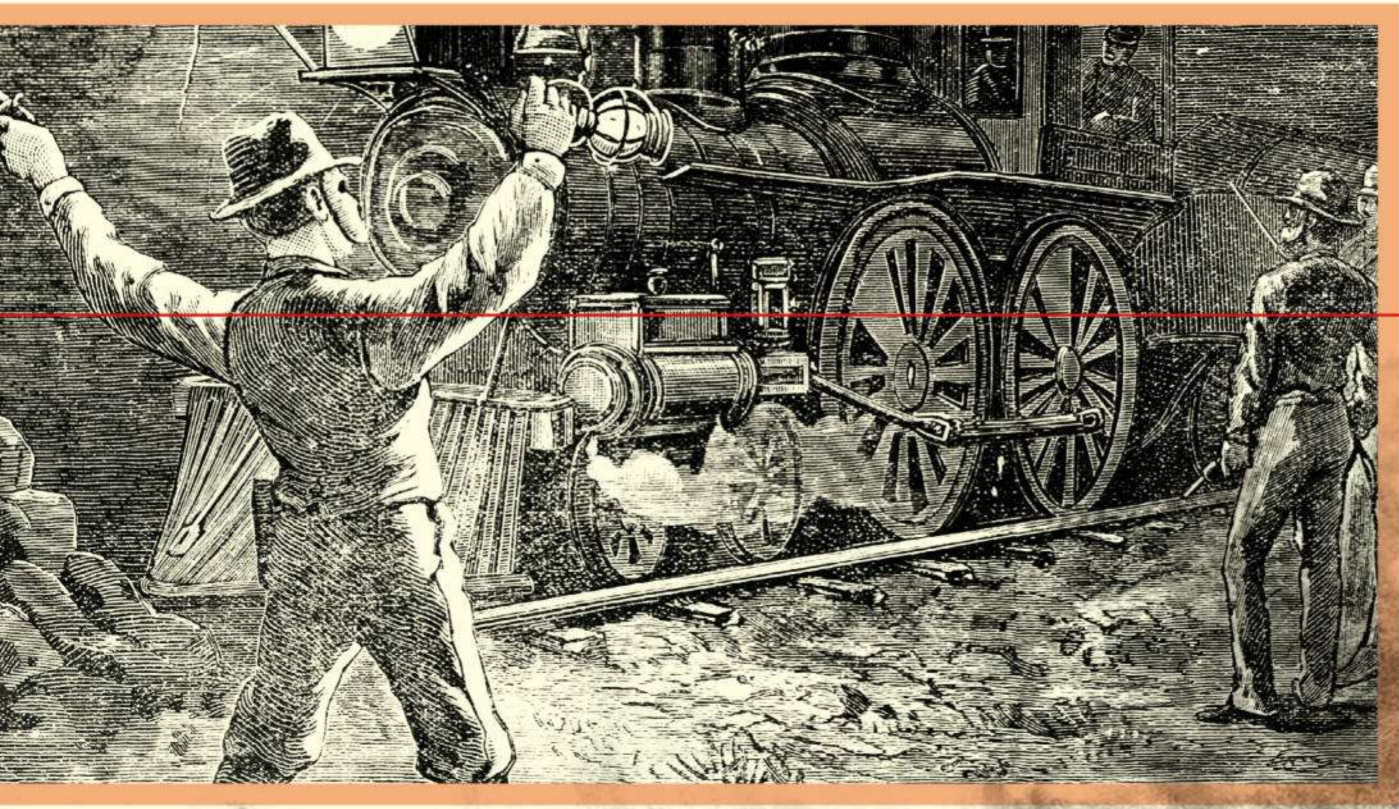
CONFEDERATE. OUTLAW. TERRORIST?

While the United States tried to move towards a more equal and harmonious landscape, racism was still rife. Confederate guerilla soldiers such as Clement refused to relent and continued to apply pressure on and intimidate Republican officials and former Union leaders. Clement's gang targeted banks, robbing those who had supported the Union during the war and killing people who patronised their business. It is unclear how many of these bank robberies were committed with Jesse, as his recovery was a long, drawn-out process.

On 13 February 1866 Clement's group targeted the Clay County Savings Association in the town of Liberty, Missouri, owned by Republican former militia officers. The group made off with $60,000 (worth almost $2 million in today's money) in cash and bonds. A young, innocent teenager was the only casualty of the heist. It is unclear if Frank and Jesse were a part of this particular attack; some have argued that Jesse was still bedbound, recovering from his injuries, however newspapers reported that the James brothers were believed to have been connected after "a very fine mare" was left at the scene of the crime and "was identified as belonging to them".

That same summer Clement's gang targeted the Jackson County (Missouri) Jail for a prisoner break in June 1866. Reportedly a group of "six or seven men" released two jailed members of Quantrill's gang. The *St Louis Globe-Democrat* reported: "The Bushwackers were beaten off; but Henry Bulger, the Deputy Sheriff and Jailor, was instantly killed and his little boy was dangerously injured." Paying tribute to Bulgar, the Missouri Mayor declared: "Last night, fiends in the human form, with murder, destruction and intent to wrest a fellow fiend from the power of the law in their hearts, rode into our city and spread panic and dread to every heart that was human and whereas they murdered in cold blood."

In late 1866, Clement was shot dead by state militia, yet his men continued to conduct bank robberies and lynch Northern sympathisers. Jesse rose to infamy in December 1869 following the robbery of the Davies County Savings Association in Gallatin, Missouri. Jesse, accompanied by Frank and eight other men, shot and killed the cashier, Captain John Sheets, mistakenly believing him to be the militia officer who had killed his friend and mentor Anderson during the Civil War. The *Missouri Republican* newspaper on 17 December 1869 reported that Jesse "was implicated in the bank robbery at Richmond Missouri in 1866 and ever since the war has been regarded as a desperate and dangerous character". Jesse was launched into widespread notoriety and branded an outlaw, and Missouri Governor Thomas



All images © Alamy, ©Getty Images

LEFT Jesse James and his gang are believed to have committed more than 20 bank and train robberies between 1860 and 1882

FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE

Six decades after Jesse James' death, speculation arose that he had survived Robert Ford's assassination

In May 1948, a man who went by the name of J Frank Dalton claimed his real name to be Jesse James. He alleged that the man Robert Ford had murdered in 1882 was actually a house guest. Dalton, 101 years old at the time of his grand reveal, died on 15 August 1951 in Granbury, Texas. Sheriff Oran Baker positively identified the dead man as Jesse James, and he was buried in Granbury Cemetery with a headstone bearing the name Jesse Woodson James. But DNA testing in 1995 proved the that man slain by Ford really was Jesse James, while DNA testing on the imposter named him as William Henry Holland.

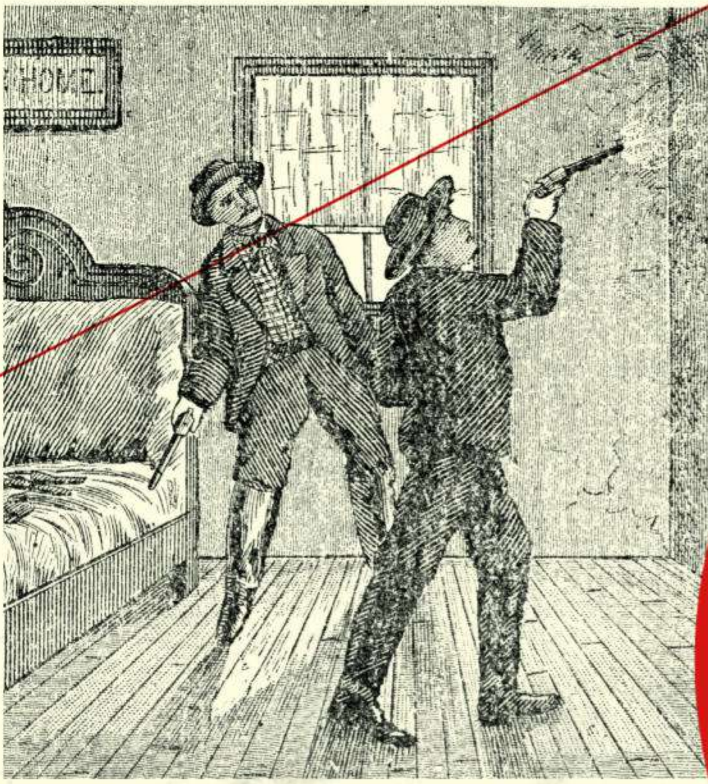
T Crittenden set a reward of $5,000 for the capture of each rebel associated with the train robberies and murders.

Jesse struck up an alliance of sorts with the editor and founder of the *Kansas City Times*, John Newman Edwards, a cavalryman for the Confederate Army during the war. Edwards' stories on Jesse were somewhat sympathetic to his plight; their alliance allowed the young outlaw to paint himself in the image of a Nationalist 'Robin Hood' and spread loyal Confederate propaganda. Edwards published letters from Jesse in which he declared: "We are not thieves, we are bold robbers. I am proud of the name, for Alexander the Great was a bold robber, and Julius Caesar, and Napoleon Bonaparte." Jesse became a Confederate icon who stood in defiance of the Federal Reconstruction policy. However, there is no evidence that he donated or gave away sums of stolen money.

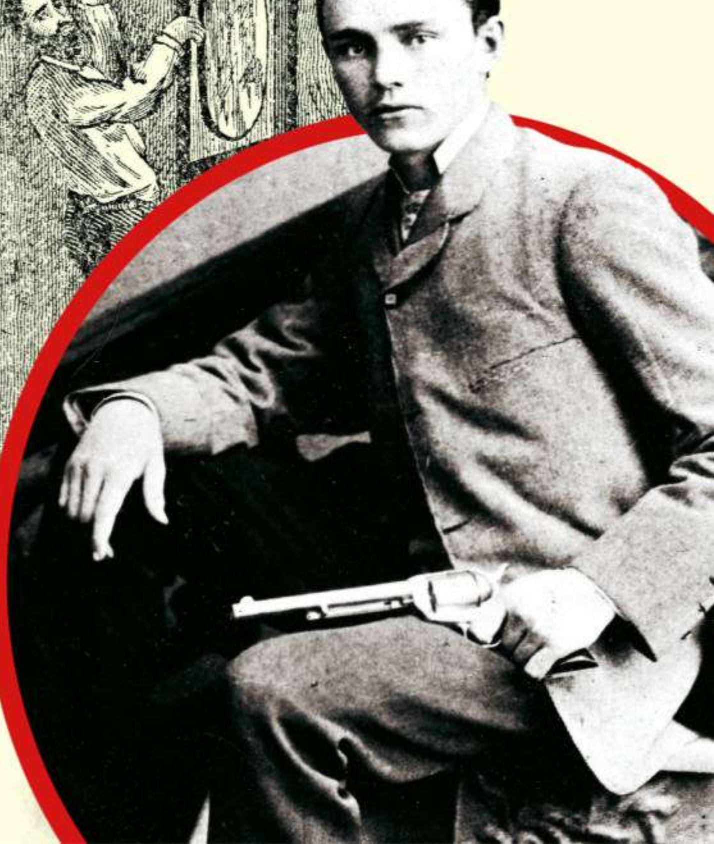
At the height of his notoriety, Jesse and Frank along with Cole Younger formed the James-Younger Gang. Younger, a member of Frank's former Confederate guerrillas led by Quantrill, brought with him members Jim Younger, Bob Younger, Clell Miller, Bill Chadwell and Charlie Pitts. Jesse became the public-facing leader of the gang, which carried out a string of robberies on banks and stagecoaches and trains across the Midwest and Texas.

In July 1873 the gang, donning Ku Klux Klan masks, derailed a Rock Island Line train west of Adair, Iowa, and stole approximately $3,000 (equivalent to $79,000 in 2025). In January 1874, Jesse and Frank, Cole Younger, Jim Younger and John Younger, held up a store in Gads Hill, Missouri, holding the townspeople hostage inside. They then held up a train, robbing passengers and the safe. The day's heist netted them $12,000 (equivalent to $334,000 in 2025) in cash. Throughout 1874 the gang targeted a number of trains and stagecoaches, each time escaping with a large sum of money and their lives. The James brothers often retreated to the family farm to lay low.

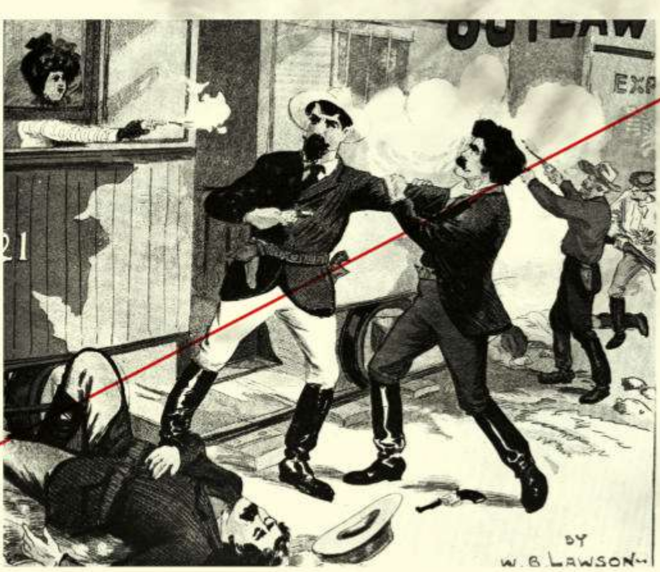
The James-Younger Gang's targeting of the trainlines led to a collaborative effort by the Adams Express Company and Pinkerton National Detective Agency to capture and arrest the members. The involvement of the Pinkerton National Detective Agency would turn out to be a huge mistake when the agency founder, Allan Pinkerton, who had been working with Unionists who lived



RIGHT James was shot dead inside his Missouri home by Robert Ford, who'd struck a deal with the Missouri governor



FAR-LEFT In their years in cahoots, the James-Younger gang stole approximately $200,000 in cash



ABOVE The gang's violent robberies were depicted in lurid detail by newspapers and magazines

near the James-Samuel farm and local detectives, ordered a raid on the James-Samuel home. Detectives threw a makeshift bomb into the farmhouse and the explosion killed Jesse's eight-year-old half-brother and caused such catastrophic injuries to Zerelda that she lost the lower portion of her right arm.

Outraged by the bounty hunters' actions, ex-Confederates and the local people rallied for the state to offer the James and Younger brothers amnesty – the legislation was only narrowly defeated. However, a bill was passed that ordered the governor's reward for the capture of fugitives be limited so as not to invoke further violence to capture the brothers. In 1875 Jesse and Frank moved their family out to Nashville, Tennessee, to avoid the attention of prying detectives.

THICK AS THIEVES

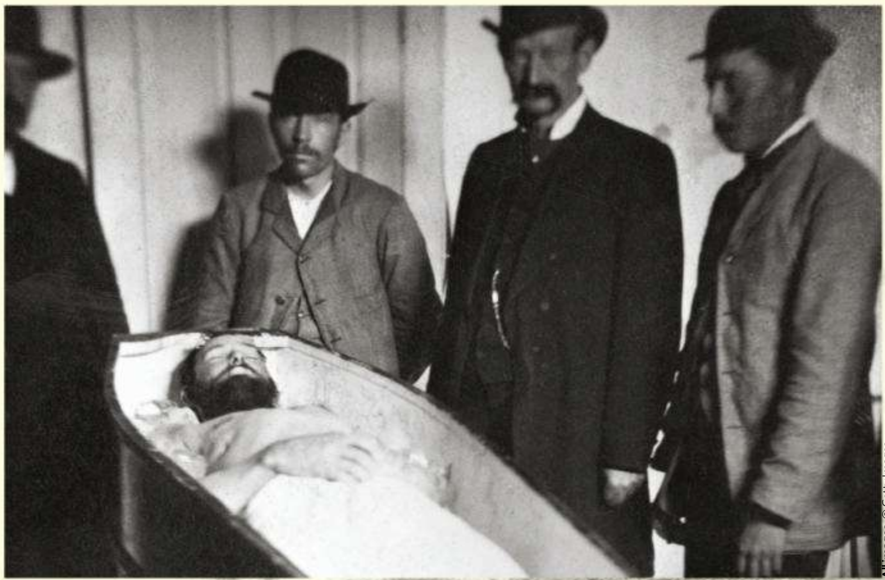
The number of heists committed by the gang dwindled and in September 1876 the group attempted a bank robbery in an area hundreds of miles outside of their comfort zone that would forever alter their paths. The National Bank of Northfield, Minnesota, which the gang believed to be a bank associated with major names of the Republican party, was set upon by the gang. The robbery was a disaster. At around 2pm Frank, Charlie Pitts and Bob Younger entered the First National Bank while Jesse, Cole, Jim Bill and Quell waited outside. A local man noticed the robbery about to get underway and raised the alarm. Residents of Northfield opened fire against the gang, killing two of the robbers on the spot.

However, the rest of the gang pushed on with the robbery. They assaulted and intimidated the cashier, Joseph Lee Heywood, with knives and pistols before murdering him. Residents hunted down the gang, who had escaped with only $26.70 in spare change. Jesse and Frank escaped back to Missouri. Cole, Jim and Bob Younger as well as Charlie Pitts were ambushed and forced to surrender. Pitts was killed in a shootout, while the surviving Younger brothers were arrested and sent to prison for murder. The James-Younger gang had been mostly obliterated overnight, and Jesse and Frank were forced to hide out in Tennessee under assumed names.

Two years later, Jesse returned to crime and Missouri, having recruited more members for the gang. But he could tell that the new recruits were unlike his former loyal band of murderous men – they were not battle-hardened guerrillas, they were rebels without a cause who would ultimately turn on each other when captured. Jesse became suspicious of the members and their loyalty.

The only two people Jesse trusted were brothers Robert and Charlie Ford. For protection, he asked the Ford brothers to move in with him and his family in St Joseph Missouri, where he was living under the pseudonym of Thomas Howard. Unbeknown to him, Robert Ford had shaken the hand of Governor Thomas T Crittenden on 13 January 1882 and made a deal. It was an arrangement that potentially offered Ford not only his freedom and $10,000, but also lifelong notoriety as the man who brought the nation's most infamous outlaw to his knees. For weeks Robert, along with his brother Charlie, lay in wait for the time to strike. Inside Jesse's modest town house on Clay County's Lafayette Street, Robert pulled his gun and shot Jesse in the back of the head as he straightened a picture on the wall, bringing to a close a violent chapter in Missouri's history. ○

> "JESSE BECAME A CONFEDERATE ICON WHO STOOD IN DEFIANCE OF THE FEDERAL RECONSTRUCTION POLICY"



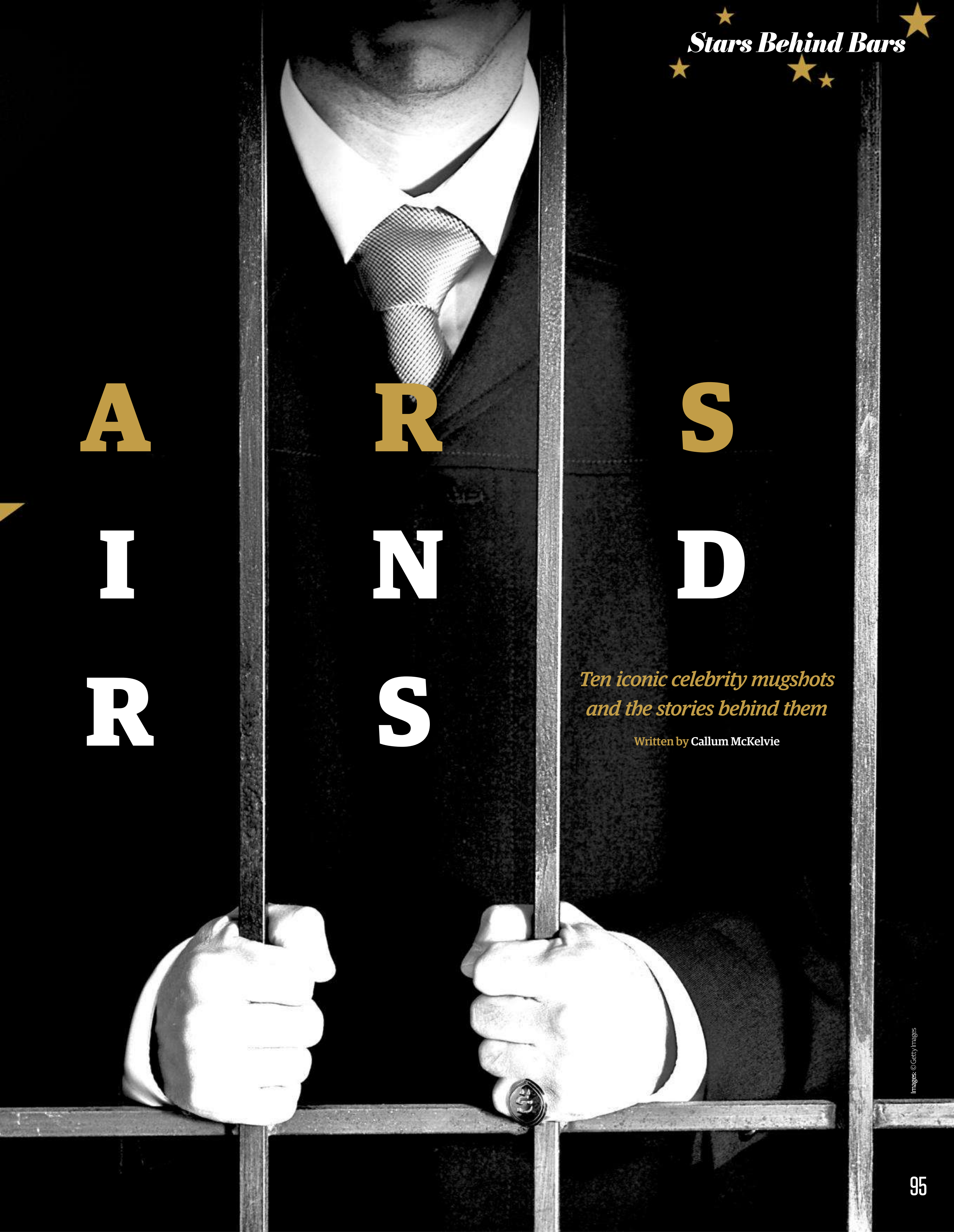
BELOW James' body was returned to the Missouri farm where he grew up. He is buried at Mount Olivet Cemetery in Kearney, Missouri

All images: © Getty Images

S T
B E H
B A

A warning to any would-be rock stars, actors, TikTokers and influencers: be prepared to have your photo taken - lots of photos. From elaborately staged red carpet shoots to less-than-glamorous paparazzi snaps, pick your favourite celebrity and no doubt thousands of pictures can be found in a simple Google search. But some A-listers have had to get used to a very different image being shared online, one they would perhaps prefer you didn't see - their mugshot.

During the last century some of the most famous and widely recognised celebs found themselves arrested, placed in handcuffs and hauled in front of police cameras. From Cher, caught driving while only 13 years old, to Frank Sinatra, arrested as a young man for the offence of 'seduction', the crimes these A-listers found themselves charged with are varied to say the least. So let's spend a night in the slammer and get to know some of the most famous stars behind bars. ▶



A R S
I N D
R S

Ten iconic celebrity mugshots and the stories behind them

Written by **Callum McKelvie**

Images: © Getty Images

NAME: FRANK SINATRA
DATE OF ARREST: 27 NOVEMBER 1938/ 22 DECEMBER 1938
ACCUSATION: SEDUCTION, ADULTERY

BERGEN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
11 27 38
42799

Frank Sinatra – singer, actor and future Ratpacker – was just 23 years old when he found himself on the wrong side of the law. But to our modern sensibilities the crime he was accused of might seem a surprising one – seduction. At the time, this was an offence under laws that were designed to protect the virtue of women. These laws allowed women to bring legal action against men who, according to an 1856 Iowa ruling, by "promise or artifice" or "by flattery or deception" had enticed them into the bedroom.

> **"SINATRA WAS RELEASED AFTER ONLY A FEW HOURS"**

The young Sinatra landed in hot water after supposedly propositioning a woman and offering to marry her. When it was discovered that the woman in question was already married, the charges against the singer were dropped. But Sinatra hardly had time to utter a sigh of relief because he suddenly found himself rearrested the following month – this time on charges of adultery.

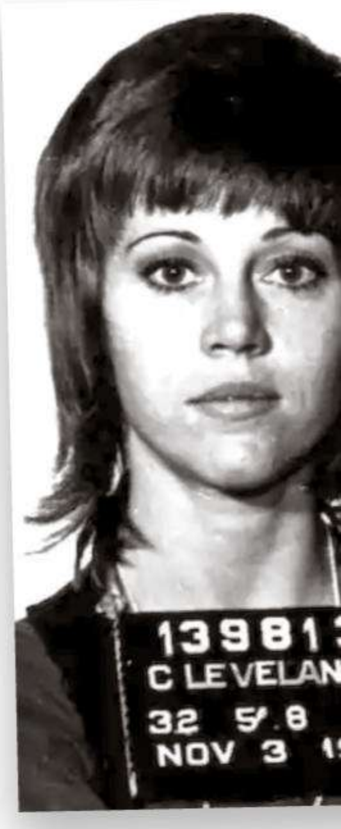
He was able to pay a $500 bond and was freed from police custody after only a few hours behind bars, and fortunately for him the incident didn't scupper his burgeoning showbiz career. Sinatra went on to become one of the 20th century's most successful performers, with classic songs such as *My Way* (1969) and *New York, New York* (1980), and appearances in films including *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955) and *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962).

On 3 November 1970, actress Jane Fonda was on her way home from a trip to Canada, where she had given a speech protesting against the ongoing Vietnam War. Upon reentering the United States at Cleveland Airport, she was taken aside by officers and her luggage searched. They quickly came upon a bag full of vitamin pills and Fonda was arrested under the suspicion that the pills were illegal drugs.

The real reason for Fonda being searched was soon the source of fevered speculation in the media. She was a vocal critic of the Vietnam War and had been photographed astride a North Vietnamese anti-aircraft gun in Hanoi – an image that earned her the nickname 'Hanoi Jane'. She had also called for American POWs to be executed. The officer at the airport allegedly told Fonda that she'd been detained on the direct orders of US President Richard Nixon.

Her mugshot quickly became an iconic image. In it her hair is in shaggy bangs, the same cut she wore in the 1971 film *Klute* co-starring the late Donald Sutherland, and her fist is raised in defiance. According to *Vogue* magazine, the photograph soon became "a symbol for women who won't back down".

This would not be the last time Fonda would spend an evening behind bars. In 2019, she was arrested five times during the Washington 'Fire Drill Friday' protests. Fonda had worked with Greenpeace to launch the movement, which seeks to raise awareness of the dangers of climate change. "One night, big deal!" she remarked of her second stint in the slammer.



BK 2154713 01 27 59
LOS ANGELES POLICE HWD

NAME:
CHER
DATE OF ARREST:
27 JANUARY 1959
ACCUSATION:
'BORROWING' A CAR AND DRIVING WITHOUT A LICENCE

Without a doubt the youngest star on our list is Cher, years before she became known as one half of Sonny and Cher and later the singer of such hits as *Believe* (1998). At just 13 years old, on 27 January 1959 she found herself in the back of a Los Angeles police car.

What had the future pop icon done to find herself in this situation? Allegedly, she had been sitting in a friend's car outside his home while he ran inside. Cher waited patiently... and waited... and waited. Soon angry drivers complained that she was blocking the road, so she moved the car to allow them to pass... and continued to wait.

Finally, Cher decided enough was enough, her friend was taking too long and she refused to wait any longer. She 'borrowed' the car and drove across town to a drive-in movie theatre, but police were soon alerted to the young teen spotted behind the wheel. At 3.30 in the morning her mother received the call all parents dread – her young daughter was in police custody.

The incident was brought up during the 2013 television special *Dear Mom, Love Cher*. While Cher didn't initially remember what had happened, her mother Georgia Holt recounted the story in full, including the moment she received the dreaded phone call. To her daughter's horror, she then proudly displayed the infamous mugshot!

NAME: JANE FONDA
DATE OF ARREST: 3 NOVEMBER 1970
ACCUSATION: ASSAULTING AN OFFICER/ POSSESSION OF DRUGS

A titan of 20th century cinema, Al Pacino has starred in such classics as *The Godfather* (1972) and *Heat* (1995). He has been nominated for nine Oscars (making him one of the actors with the most nominations) and won for his performance in 1992's *Scent of a Woman*. But long before he became a household name and worked with the likes of Marlon Brando, Pacino found himself spending three days in a Rhode Island jail.

In 1961 Pacino and two friends were pulled over after they had been spotted driving around the same area again and again. Upon investigating, arresting officers found the would-be actor and his friends wearing balaclavas and gloves. When a gun was discovered hidden in the boot, the officers took no chances and arrested all three on the spot.

Unable to pay the $2,000 fine required to secure his freedom, Pacino spent the following three nights in jail on suspicion of attempted robbery. He told the police that the loaded pistol was intended for use only as a prop and that the three young men had been on their way to an audition. The young actor was eventually released without charge.

Pacino never again crossed paths with the law, making his film debut in 1969, and since then he has gone on to star in over 70 movies. Recent film appearances include 2019's *The Irishman* and 2021's *House of Gucci*.

ADULT CORR INSTS
48634
JAN 9 1961

NAME: AL PACINO
DATE OF ARREST:
7 JANUARY 1961
ACCUSATION:
POSSESSION OF A CONCEALED WEAPON

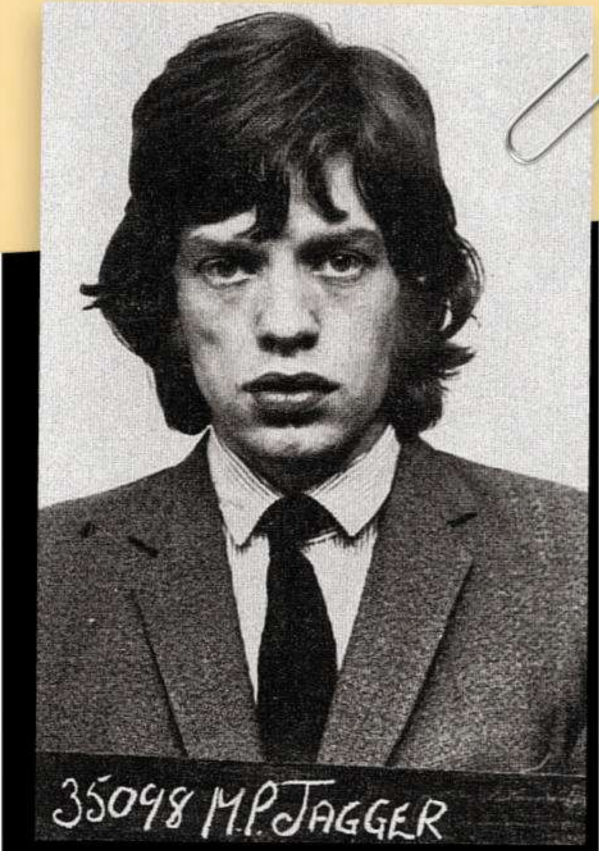
The Rolling Stones, originally composed of Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Brian Jones, Bill Wyman and Charlie Watts, were one of the biggest bands of the 1960s and remain so today. Their debut album, released on 17 April 1964, was a hit and topped the UK charts.

But in February 1967 the band was rocked by scandal. An article appeared in the *News of the World* that alleged Jagger had been seen at the Blaises nightclub in London smoking marijuana and taking other illegal substances. On 12 February police raided Keith Richards' home.

Initially Jagger was sentenced to three months imprisonment and Richards received an entire year. However, after an appeal both had their sentences reduced. Jagger would be arrested once more for alleged drug possession, on 24 May 1968, alongside his partner Marianne Faithfull.

But this would not be the singer's final brush with the law. In 1972 he was arrested by Warwick police after getting into an altercation with a photographer. The band had been booked for a concert that evening in Boston and when Kevin White, the town's mayor, heard about the arrest he was concerned about the potential chaos if the Stones did not show up. After pulling some strings, White ensured that Jagger and the band arrived on stage at 12.45am. ▶

NAME: MICK JAGGER
DATE OF ARREST: FEBRUARY 1967
ACCUSATION: POSSESSION OF DRUGS



Images: © Alamy, © Getty Images

By 1976, David Bowie was already a star. He had retired his Ziggy Stardust persona three years earlier and in 1974 had moved to the United States. However, on 25 March he found himself arrested for drug offences in Rochester, New York, in an incident that would spur him to move to Europe.

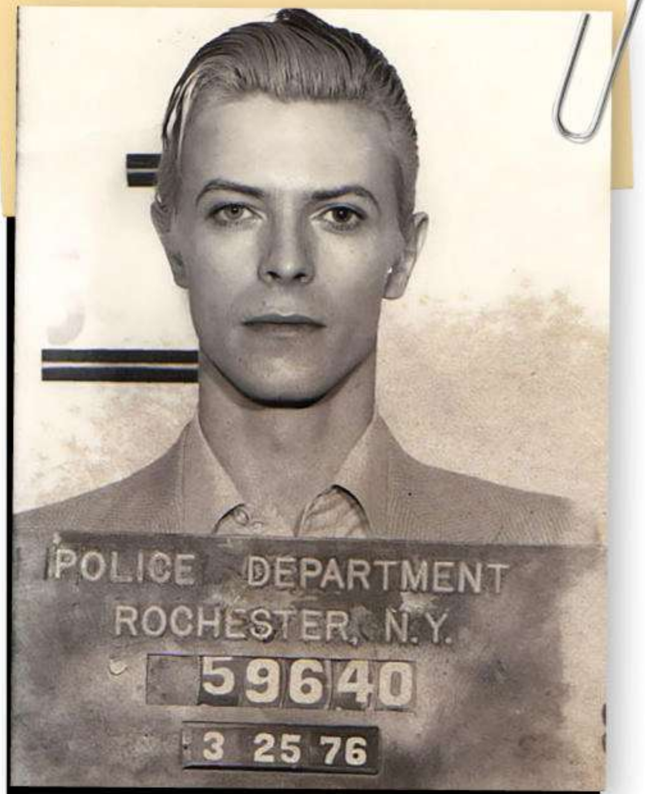
But Bowie was not alone when arrested. Another singer was taken into custody alongside him, though this star had not quite yet fully risen: Iggy Pop. The pair, along with two others, were charged with possession of marijuana.

Bowie and Iggy Pop had been struggling with substance abuse for several years. When Iggy Pop voluntarily submitted himself to a psychiatric ward, Bowie frequently visited him. However, according to one story, Bowie and either Dennis Hopper or Dean Stockwell (accounts differ as to which actor it was) once smuggled cocaine into the facility - while wearing spacesuits.

Following their arrest, Bowie and Iggy Pop decided that enough was enough and the time had come to beat their addictions once and for all. "Well, both Iggy and I felt like it might be time to clean up," Bowie stated in a 1997 interview. "We were very smart about it — we went straight out of LA to the heroin capital of Europe: Berlin!"

Bowie's original mugshot was auctioned in 2022 and sold for £4,940 - far more than its original estimate of £1,000 to £1,500.

NAME: DAVID BOWIE
DATE OF ARREST: 25 MARCH 1976
ACCUSATION: POSSESSION OF MARIJUANA



"I'VE ALWAYS TRIED TO HAVE A FAIR AMOUNT OF CASH WITH ME. I LIKE THE IDEA OF BEING ABLE TO BAIL MYSELF OUT"

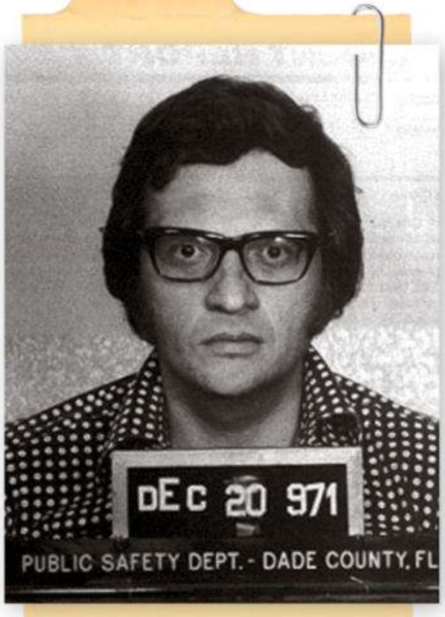
NAME: BILL GATES
DATE OF ARREST: 13 DECEMBER 1977
ACCUSATION: SPEEDING/RUNNING A RED LIGHT

By 1971, Larry King was already a popular Miami radio and television host, working as a late-night presenter and sports commentator. However, he soon found himself dismissed from both positions and in the middle of a career slump when he was arrested for grand larceny.

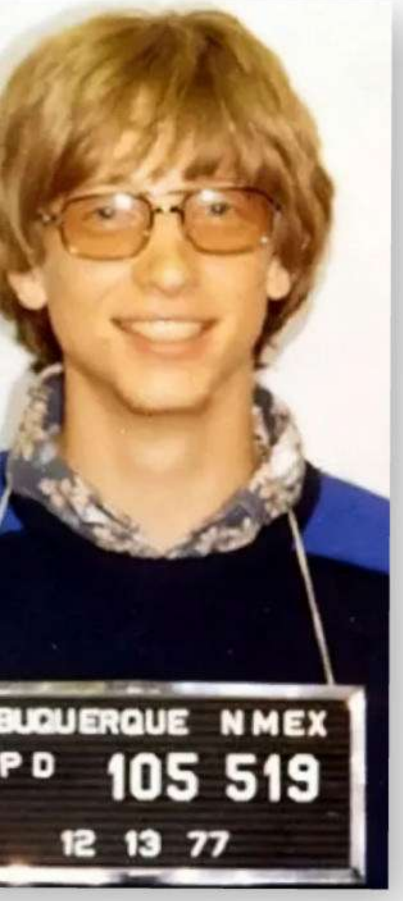
The trouble began when his former friend and business partner Louis Wolfson accused King of stealing $5,000. The money was supposedly part of a $25,000 payment Wolfson made intended for New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison, who was investigating the assassination of JFK. King was meant to deliver the payment but was accused of taking the money for himself.

The grand larceny charge against him was dismissed because the statute of limitations had expired. But Wolfson was not happy and allegedly attempted to get King's employers to pay for the television personality to spend a stint in a mental institution so "he can do no further harm in this community or in any other".

The scandal had a lingering effect and King spent several years battling to rebuild his media career - eventually with considerable success. By 1978 he began hosting the *Larry King Show* and in 1985 started *Larry King Live*. Nonetheless, the past proved difficult to shake off. In 2014, a biography of Wolfson entitled *Junkman Genius* was published and tales of King's supposed theft resurfaced in the press.


DEC 20 971
PUBLIC SAFETY DEPT. - DADE COUNTY, FL

NAME:
LARRY KING
DATE OF ARREST:
20 DECEMBER 1971
ACCUSATION:
GRAND LARCENY



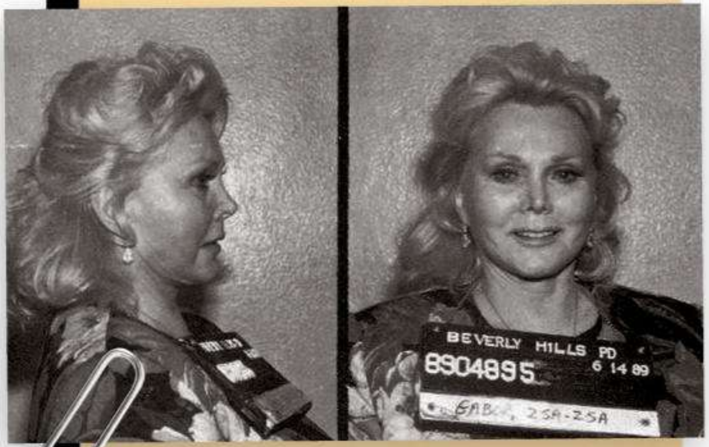
Perhaps one of the most iconic celebrity mugshots is this image of Bill Gates, taken in 1977 when he was only 22 years old. The future tech mogul found himself in front of a police camera after he'd been caught speeding and running a red light.

Arrested and taken into custody, the young Gates had to spend the night in a cell, surrounded by, as he himself described it, "all the drunks". And this wasn't his first run in with the law – he'd been arrested two years earlier for the same offences. The car he was driving at the time of his 1977 arrest wasn't even his own but the property of his childhood friend and co-founder of Microsoft, Paul Allen.

Although some disputed this image's authenticity, Gates himself addressed the photograph in a 2007 interview with *Time* magazine, claiming the notorious incident had taught him a valuable lesson as a young man. "I've always tried to have a fair amount of cash with me," Gates explained. "I like the idea of being able to bail myself out."

The mugshot has become iconic, with suggestions that it has more than a passing resemblance to the blank silhouette used as the default profile icon for Microsoft Outlook. Was the photo's silhouette used as a secret in-joke? We may never know, but the image of Gates grinning from ear to ear for the police has become infamous, with prints and posters available online.

NAME: ZSA ZSA GABOR
DATE OF ARREST: 14 JUNE 1989
ACCUSATION: ASSAULT, DRIVING WITHOUT A LICENCE AND CARRYING OPEN ALCOHOL



When LA motorcycle officer Paul Kramer pulled over a Rolls-Royce for driving with expired number plates on 14 June 1989, he had no idea who the occupant of the car was… or what lay in store for him.

Behind the wheel was Zsa Zsa Gabor, the actress and fashion icon who'd appeared in films such as 1952's *Moulin Rouge* and 1958's *Queen of Outer Space*. Gabor drove off and Kramer pursued her, forcing her to pull over again. But it was what Gabor did next that made her arrest so infamous. When asked to get out of the car a second time, she slapped Kramer in the face.

Following the arrest, Gabor was tried in what the *Los Angeles Times* described as "less of a trial than a circus". Throughout the proceedings, Gabor seemed to enjoy every moment. She made vicious attacks about Kramer's personal life both in court and to the press, including the suggestion that he had a number of secret gay lovers. So persistent were these remarks that the judge threatened to hold her in contempt of court for violating a gagging order.

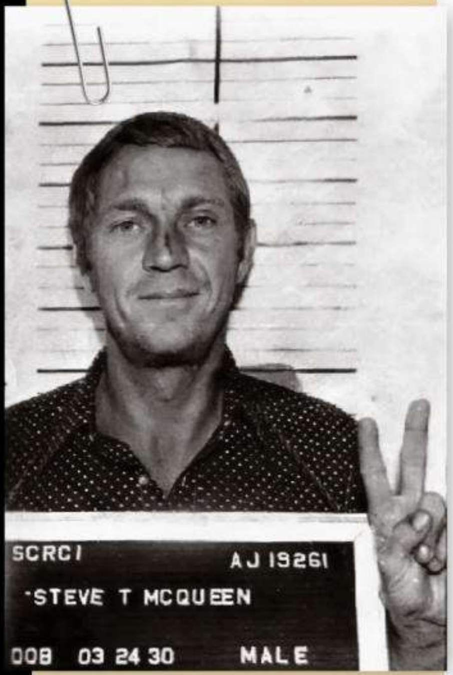
But Gabor's bravura performance in court was in vain, and she was sentenced to three days in jail and 120 hours community service. She was also ordered to pay $12,937 in fines and fees and undergo a psychiatric evaluation. But perhaps the most ludicrous moment didn't involve Gabor herself at all. Onlookers at the trial said they witnessed a fight between a Gabor impersonator and another member of the public wearing a T-shirt proclaiming 'Hang Zsa Zsa'. ○

In 1968 Steve McQueen starred in the film *Bullitt*, which is celebrated for its incredible car chase that is considered one of the best in cinema history. However, four years later he was demonstrating his own somewhat erratic driving skills when he was pulled over in Anchorage, Alaska.

McQueen had come to the town on a fishing excursion with his friend, documentary filmmaker and surfing enthusiast Bruce Brown. At some point during the trip, the locals spotted McQueen driving an Oldsmobile Tornado at high speeds up and down the main street. He's said to have pulled a few doughnuts as well.

Officers arrived on the scene and pulled McQueen over. Suspecting that he'd been drinking, they asked him to complete a simple sobriety test that involved walking in a straight line down a road marking. Instead, McQueen allegedly chose to somersault himself down the line, failing the test spectacularly.

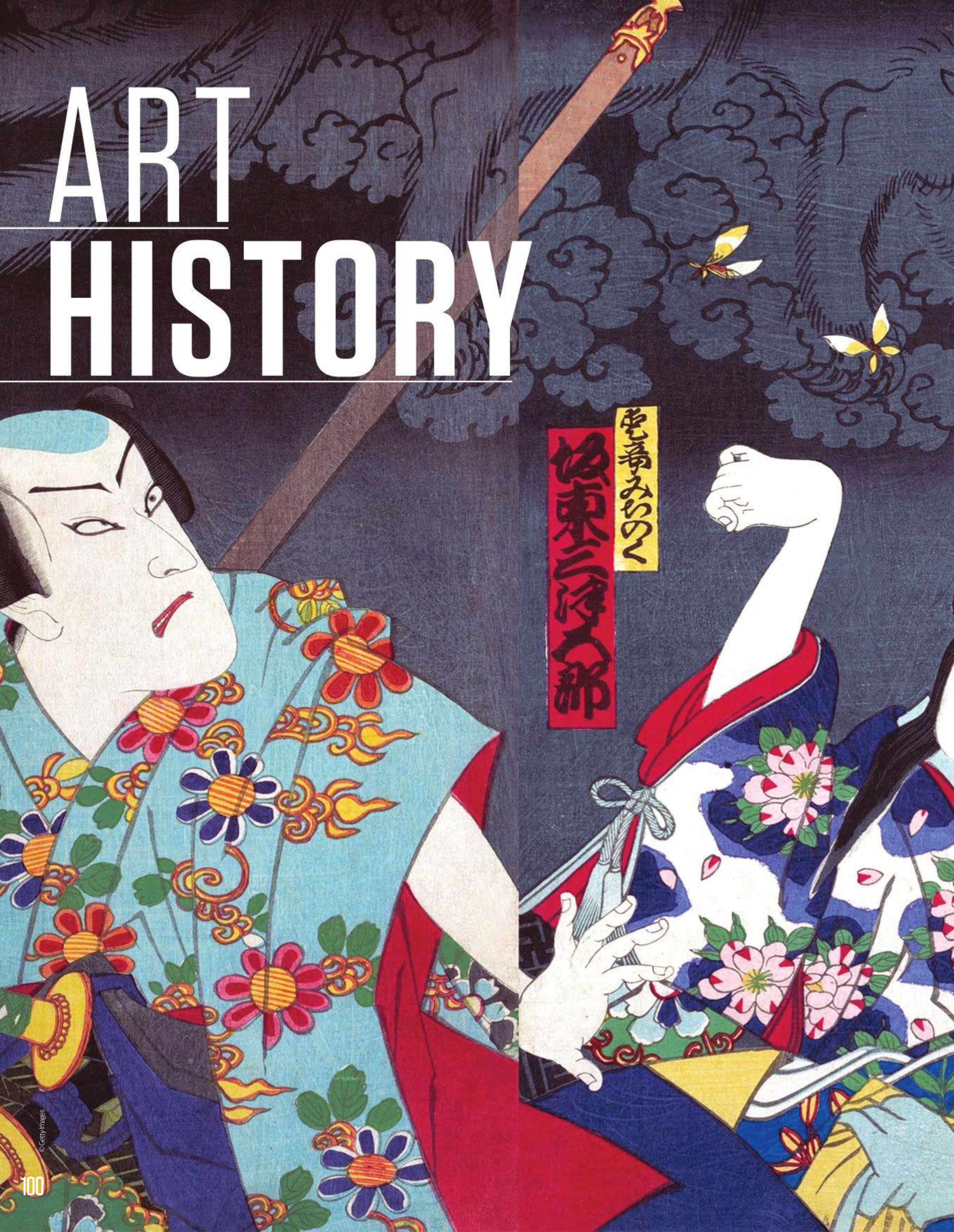
Arrested and taken to the police station, he managed to ensure his 'bad boy' persona shone through in his mugshot, raising the peace sign and giving a defiant smile as the camera flashed.



NAME: STEVE McQUEEN
DATE OF ARREST: 28 JUNE 1972
ACCUSATION: RECKLESS DRIVING

Images: © Alamy, © Getty Images

ART HISTORY



© Getty Images

豊原國周筆
元田彫長

Shakespeare's LONDON

From theatre wars to court politics, uncover the city life that inspired the Bard

Written by Catharine Arnold

Between 1576, when the first theatre opened in London, and 1642, when Oliver Cromwell shut down the playhouses, drama became England's premier art form. The last decades of Elizabeth I's reign saw an extraordinary flowering of creativity, during which drama became the premier form of entertainment. This rich cultural life developed despite a stormy political scenario in which the queen was challenged by France and Spain, and Roman Catholic factions plotted to restore England's religious alliance with Rome.

William Shakespeare's plays reflected these turbulent times, in locations familiar to every playgoer, from the palaces of Westminster, Whitehall and Hampton Court to the Tower of London, both palace and prison a terrifying reminder to anyone who challenged the Crown. ▶

Illustration: Kevin McGivern

TUDOR LONDON

Shakespeare's London was smaller than the city of today, a square mile or so of narrow medieval streets enclosed by the old Roman wall. Across the River Thames, crowded with swans and craft and so clean that salmon swam in it, was Bankside, long associated with the low life of brothels and bear gardens, and a perfect setting for the new theatres. Old London Bridge spanned the Thames, with the rotting skulls of more than 30 executed traitors displayed at the southern end.

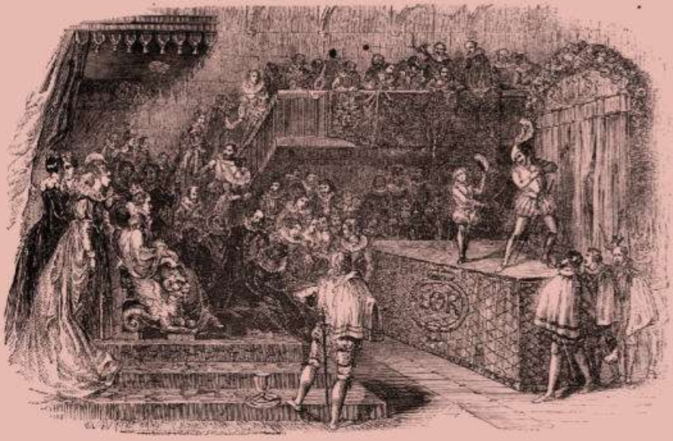
The streets of London were dominated by taverns, standing open all day and long into the night, home of some of Shakespeare's most familiar characters such as young Prince Hal, swaggering Falstaff and Mistress Quickly. Taverns played a significant part in the development of theatre, for it was here that strolling players performed, spectators crowding up to a makeshift stage or gazing down from the upper floors. It was the layout of these taverns that inspired the first theatre in London.

THE FIRST THEATRE

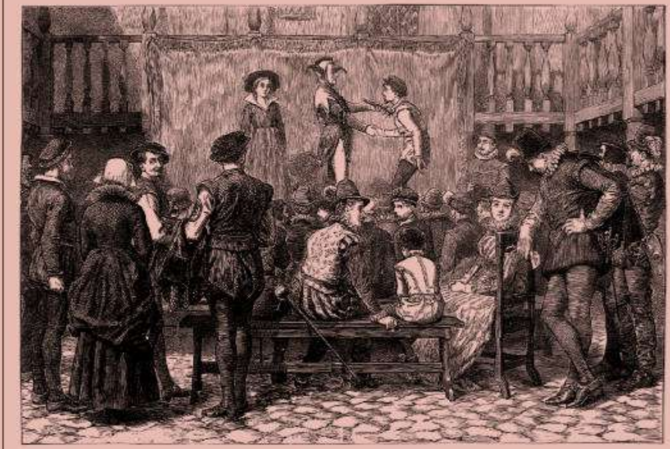
In 1576 an actor named James Burbage had the novel idea of showing a play within a purpose-built playhouse, only available to paying audiences. Burbage, father of the famous Shakespearean actor Richard Burbage, was showing his faith in a new art form and he was thoroughly vindicated.

The acting profession gained legitimacy during the 1570s and 1580s, when the players who roamed the country lanes of England were transformed from scruffy vagabonds into elegantly dressed 'strutters' under the patronage of influential courtiers such as the Earl of Leicester and the Lord Chamberlain. There were no female players – women were forbidden by law to tread the boards. Other theatres soon followed, including the Rose, the Swan and the Curtain.

In the theatre, two worlds collided: the shimmering mirage of the playhouse, with its scenes of mystery and imagination, and the criminal underworld, also built on deception.



> *Robert Greene once referred to Shakespeare as a 'groom', giving rise to a theory that his first job was 'valet parking' horses*



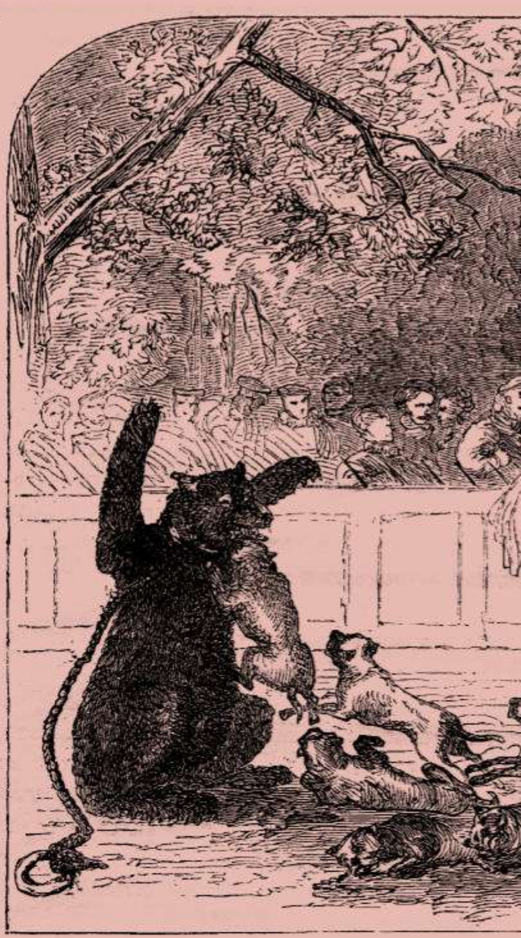
Many of those involved were chancers with little pretension to artistry, such as Philip Henslowe, the impresario of the Rose. He had started his career running a bear garden and made his fortune in pawnbroking and prostitution. He opened a brothel next door to the Rose, installed his daughter, Joan, as the manager, and she was subsequently whipped in public. Henslowe ended his days in his dream job, as King James I's bear warden.

From its humble beginnings, drama soon became the exciting new art form.

TOP Elizabeth I watching the Lord Chamberlain's Men. During Elizabeth's reign, people from all social classes visited the theatre

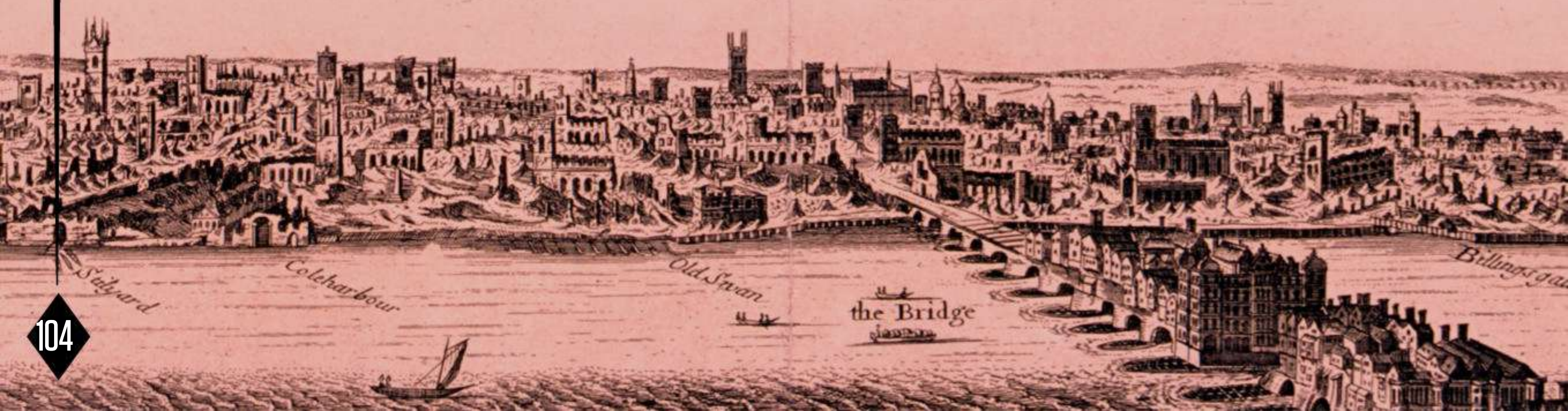
ABOVE It was forbidden for women to perform on stage, so female characters were played by boys and young men

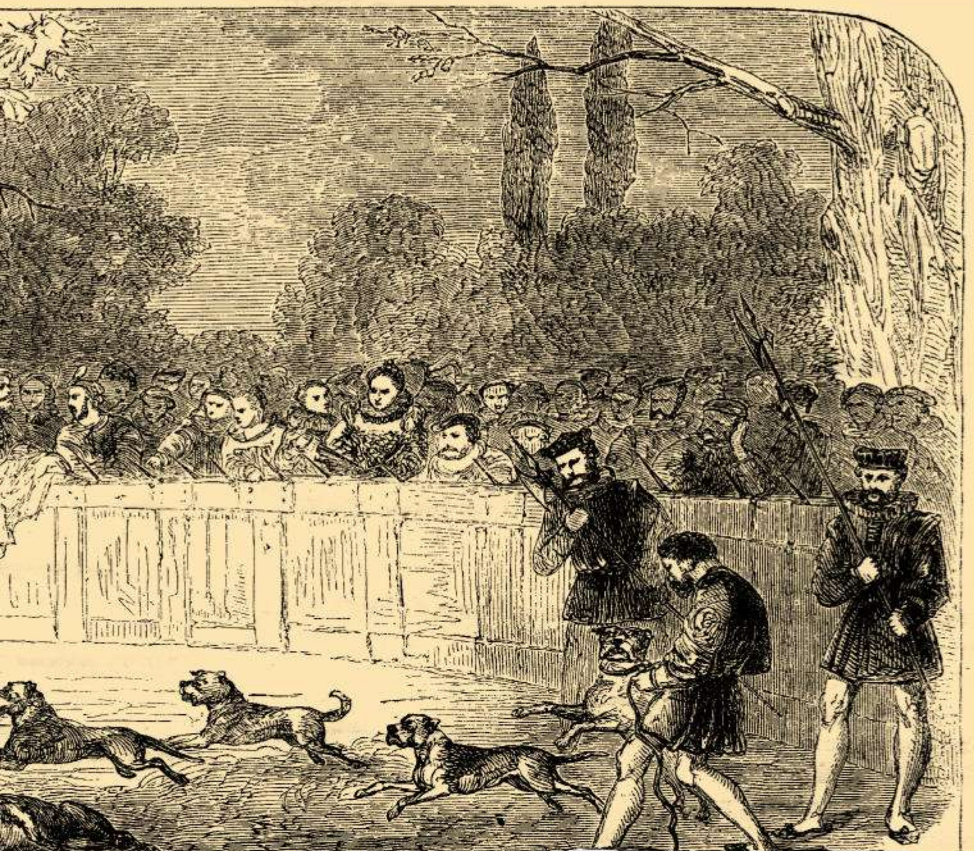
BELOW A view of the City of London from after the Great Fire



The popularity of theatre was due in part to the queen. Culture was one of the distinctive elements of Elizabeth I's reign, and visiting the theatre was the ideal way for an ambitious courtier to flourish his credentials. London, with its youthful demographic, also provided the ideal audience. As well as the Inns of Court, home of the legal profession, and the trade guilds, London had an aspiring middle class and unprecedented numbers of young people. These boisterous apprentices, shop workers and domestic servants had money in their pockets and were out for a good time. Out of a population of 200,000, around 15,000 Londoners a week paid upwards of a penny, sometimes a shilling, to watch a heady combination of sensational storylines, war stories, lurid tragedies and knockabout comedy.

Shakespeare was one of many players who came to seek his fortune during the theatre boom, leaving his wife and





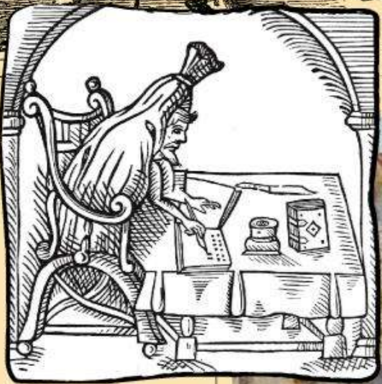
family in Stratford-upon-Avon and going to work for Burbage at the Theatre. The embittered playwright Robert Greene once referred to Shakespeare as a "groom", giving rise to a theory that his first job in London was 'valet parking' horses at the Theatre. But Burbage soon realised that Shakespeare had an extraordinary facility for language, and he was soon working alongside existing writers. Playwrights had low profiles compared with the actors, and they worked collaboratively, like the Hollywood writers' rooms of today. Shakespeare scarcely bothered to curate his own work, leaving it to his fellow actors, Hemmings and Condell, who published his plays in one posthumous volume, known as the *First Folio*, in 1623.

THEATRE LIFE

In the Elizabethan era, working in the theatre was downright dangerous. Witness the fate of Greene, the first professional writer, who possessed degrees from both Oxford and Cambridge. Greene originally treated actors with contempt, but he turned to the theatre for income and had plays produced at the Rose. Then in 1592 his comedy *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* was cancelled in favour of Shakespeare's historical epic called *Harey the Sixth*. Worse still, *Harey* played to capacity houses and broke box office records at £3.16s.8d for 15 shows, the equivalent of 72 days' wages for a skilled tradesman. The humiliated Greene dined on pickled herrings and red wine with a friend, the playwright Thomas Nashe, before penning a vicious pamphlet entitled *Greene's Groats-Worth of Witte Bought With a Million of Repentance*, warning his fellow authors about:

"an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his Tygers hart wrapt in a Players hyde . . . is in his own conceit the onely Shake-scene in a country."

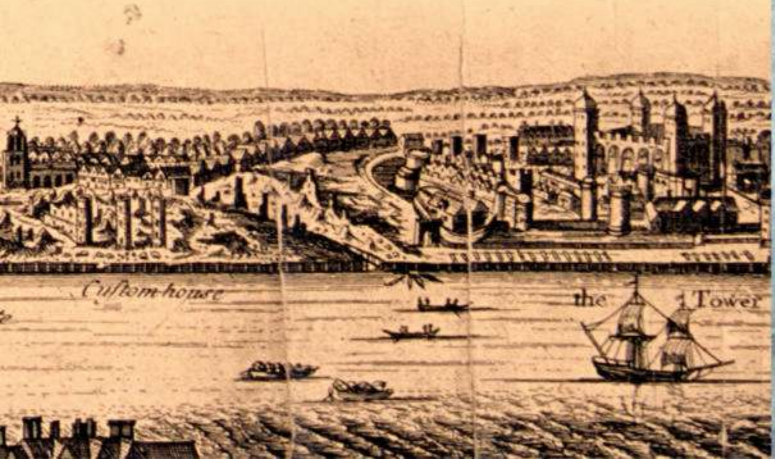
Greene died days later, so destitute that his landlady had to pay for his shroud, and was immortalised by Shakespeare's cryptic reference in ▶



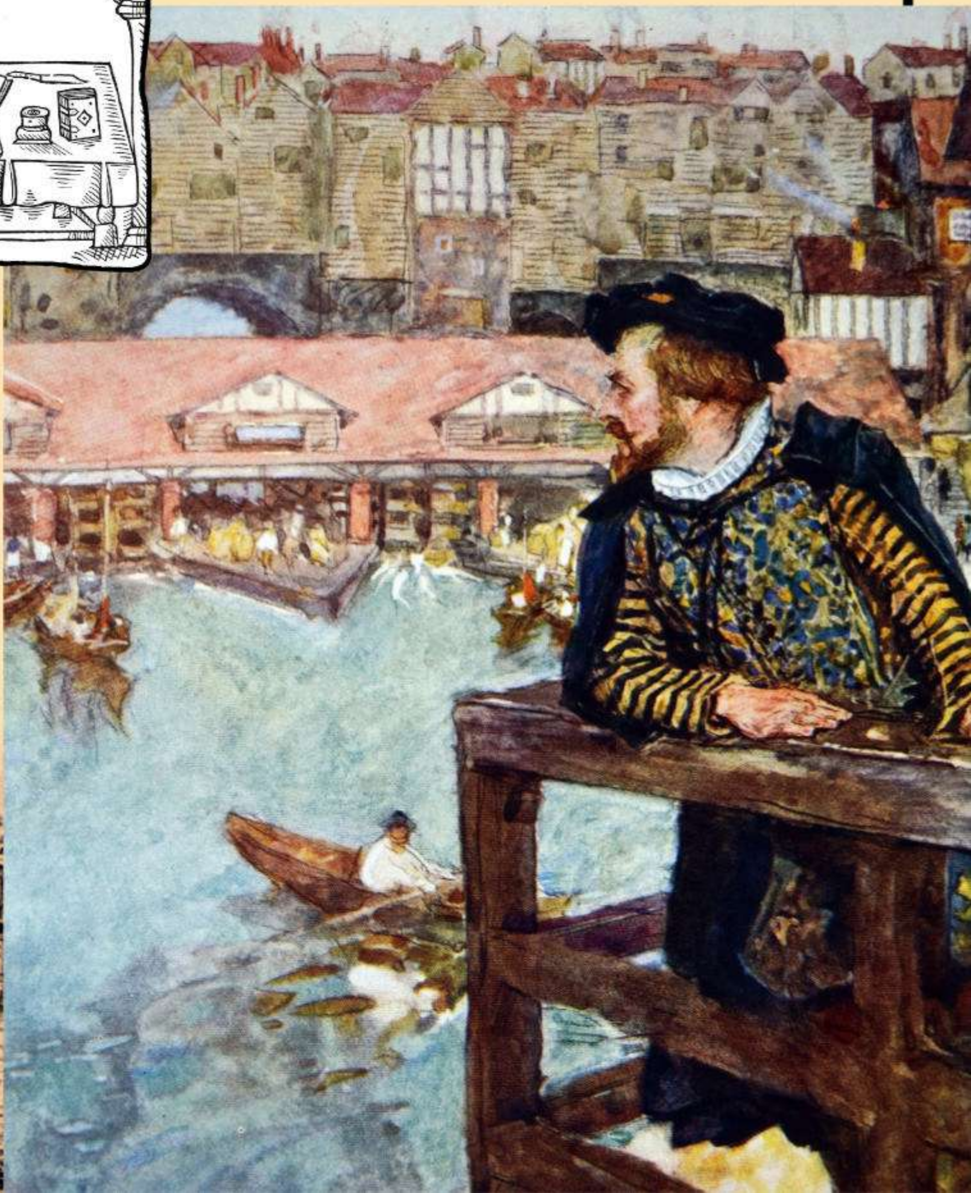
TOP Bear baiting in a ring, as practised in Elizabethan England. The layout of the rings was a precursor of the theatre

ABOVE The dying Robert Greene, already dressed in his shroud, deriding William Shakespeare as an 'upstart crow'

All images: © Getty Images, © Alamy



BELOW Shakespeare depicted near the water mills below London Bridge



Timeline of Shakespeare

Key events in the life of the Bard

1564
William Shakespeare is born in Stratford-upon-Avon to John Shakespeare and Mary Arden.

1568
John Shakespeare becomes high bailiff of Stratford.

1572
John Shakespeare charged with illegal wool trading and forced into debt.

1582
William Shakespeare, aged 18, marries Anne Hathaway, aged 26.

1583
William and Anne welcome their daughter Susannah.

1585
Twins Judith and Hamnet are born to the Shakespeare family.

c.1590
Shakespeare writes *The Taming of the Shrew* in this period.

1592
Shakespeare is first mentioned in London in a pamphlet published by Robert Greene.

1594
Shakespeare starts the Lord Chamberlain's Men theatre company with Richard Burbage and Will Kempe.

1595
A Midsummer Night's Dream, *Romeo & Juliet* and *Richard II* are all believed to have been written around 1595 and 1596. *King John*, *The Merchant of Venice* and more follow.

A Midsummer Night's Dream to "learning late deceased in poverty".

Other risks included outbreaks of the plague, which left theatres 'dark' (closed) for weeks at a time and the actors with no source of income. Censorship was another hazard, with the authorities seizing on any excuse to shut the theatres. When apprentices rioted following a production of William Kemp's *A Knack to Know a Knave* in 1594, the Lord Mayor of London wrote to Queen Elizabeth demanding that the "pestilential playhouses be plucked down".

It was extremely easy for a writer to find himself on the wrong side of the law. At a time when the distinction between petty crime and grand treason was decidedly indistinct, many authors were flung into prison for producing a political satire. In 1597, the playwright Ben Jonson teamed up with Thomas Nashe to complete Nashe's vicious satire *The Isle of Dogs*. The title referred to a former island off the East End of London which traditionally housed the king's kennels and offered immunity from debt. When the play was staged at the Swan, it was deemed so seditious that the theatre was raided and Jonson and his fellow actors, Gabriel Spenser and Robert Shaw, were thrown into jail. Nashe escaped to Norfolk and all copies of the play were destroyed. Two years later, the 'War of the Theatres' broke out.

> "When The Isle of Dogs was staged it was considered so seditious that the theatre was raided

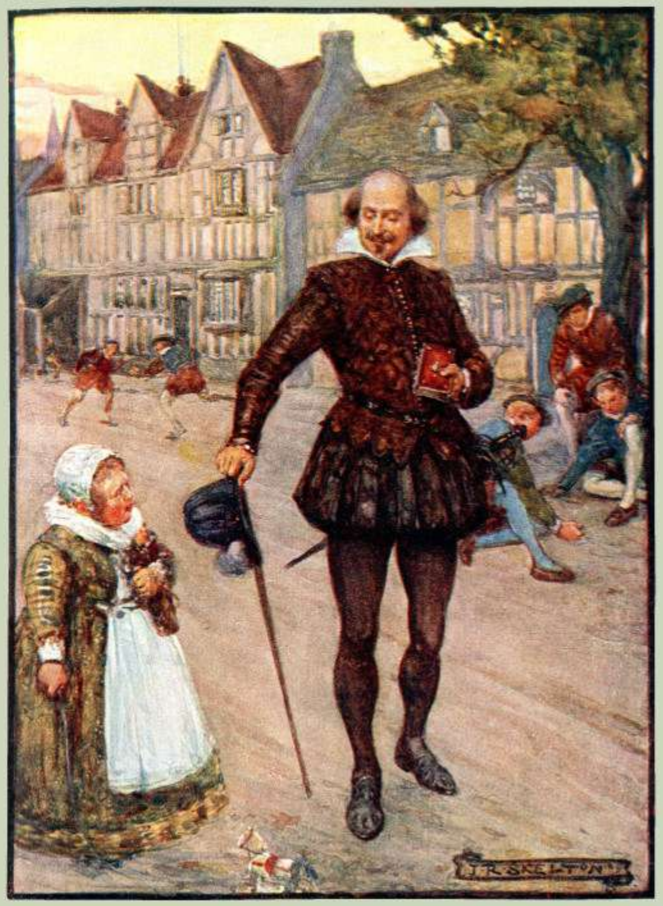
WAR OF THE THEATRES

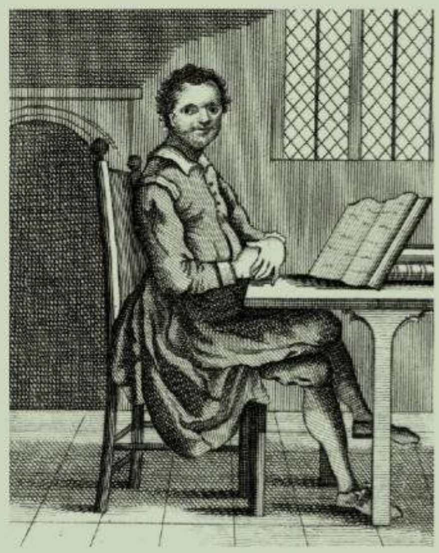
This was an exchange of words, not blows. In 1599, the Archbishop of Canterbury John Whitgift and the Bishop of London Richard Bancroft banned writers from publishing any form of satirical material, whether in poetry or prose. Works by Nashe, John Marston and Gabriel Harvey were burnt, leaving live theatre the only outlet for satire. A battle of wits ensued between Jonson and his rivals Marston and Thomas Dekker. Marston started the hostilities in 1599 when he pilloried Jonson's pride in *Histriomastix*. Jonson retaliated with a parody of Marston's lurid style in *Every Man Out of His Humour* at the end of the same year. Marston hit back at Jonson with *Jack Drum's Entertainment* (1600) performed by a troupe of child actors, The Children of Paul's, and Jonson was satirised as a "Brabant Senior", a "cuckold" (meaning that his wife was unfaithful). Jonson responded with *Cynthia's Revels*, (1600), played by another children's company, The Children ▶

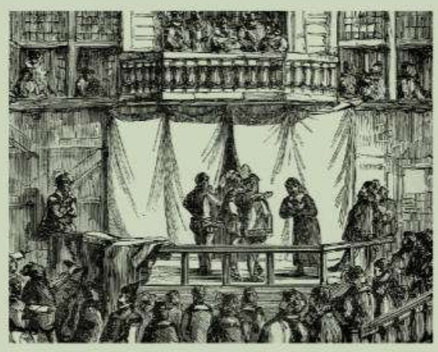
BELOW LEFT As his career blossomed, Shakespeare became a well-known figure on the streets of London

BELOW The playwright Ben Jonson started life as a bricklayer and ended up as Poet Laureate

BOTTOM An illustration of an early Elizabethan theatre circa 1570 - 1629. Note that the audience is standing



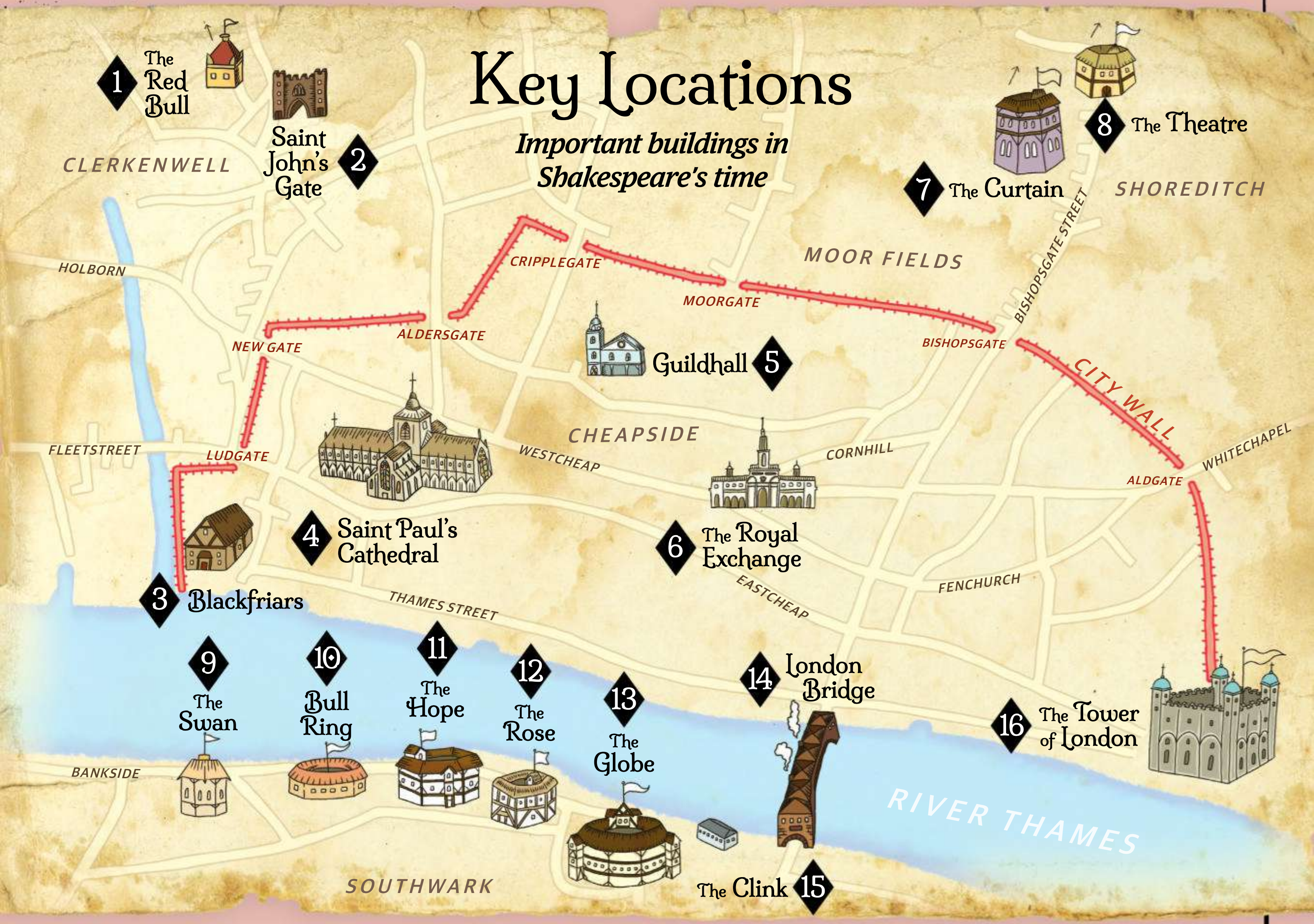




All images: © Alamy, Map illustration: Abbi Castle

Key Locations

Important buildings in Shakespeare's time


1 The Red Bull
Saint John's Gate 2
CLERKENWELL
HOLBORN
CRIPPLEGATE
MOOR FIELDS
MOORGATE
7 The Curtain
8 The Theatre
SHOREDITCH
BISHOPSGATE STREET
BISHOPSGATE
NEW GATE
ALDERSGATE
Guildhall 5
CITY WALL
FLEETSTREET
LUDGATE
CHEAPSIDE
WESTCHEAP
CORNHILL
WHITECHAPEL
ALDGATE
4 Saint Paul's Cathedral
6 The Royal Exchange
EASTCHEAP
FENCHURCH
3 Blackfriars
THAMES STREET
9 The Swan
10 Bull Ring
11 The Hope
12 The Rose
13 The Globe
14 London Bridge
16 The Tower of London
BANKSIDE
RIVER THAMES
SOUTHWARK
The Clink 15

1 The Red Bull

An outdoor theatre that staged plays between 1604 and 1642 by Queen Anne's Men, Prince Charles' Men and The Red Bull Company.

2 Saint John's Gate

Still standing today, this would have been the location of the Master of Revels in Shakespeare's time, in charge of censoring plays in London.

3 Blackfriars

Two indoor theatres were located at Blackfriars. The first ran from 1576-84, the second staged plays from 1596 – 1642. More wealthy patrons attended indoor plays.

4 Saint Paul's Cathedral

Interestingly there was a theatre associated with this prestigious location. St Paul's playhouse shared a border with the old church. It ran from 1575 – 1606.

5 Guildhall

One of the oldest buildings still standing in London, Guildhall is where many would have paid their taxes. The adjacent library recently displayed a copy of the *First Folio*.

---

6 The Royal Exchange

The original Royal Exchange was opened by Queen Elizabeth I in 1571 as a commercial site, but burned down in the Great Fire in 1666.

7 The Curtain

This round outdoor theatre was one of the first in London, operating from 1577 – 1625. It staged Shakespeare's work from 1597-99.

8 The Theatre

This was the first purpose-built early-modern playhouse to be built in London, hosting the Chamberlain's Men (later the King's Men). It operated from 1576-98.

9 The Swan

Opened by Francis Langley, this round theatre was the second to be located on Bankside, which proved to be a successful location. It operated from 1595 to 1628.

10 Bull Ring

As its name suggests, this was the home for bull and bear baiting, but also acted as a theatre. The bloodsports were eventually banned in 1835.

---

11 The Hope

The last of the outdoor Bankside theatres to be built, the Hope was a bear-baiting venue as well as a playhouse. It ran from 1614-42.

12 The Rose

This theatre was the first on the south side of the river, opened by Philip Henslowe and operating from 1587 – 1604.

13 The Globe

The famous Globe was opened in 1599, operating until 1642, and was the home of Shakespeare's own Chamberlain's Men (later the King's Men from 1603).

14 London Bridge

In Shakespeare's time the bridge would have been covered in buildings and was the main point of entry to the City of London for travellers.

15 The Clink

A prison dating back to King Stephen, the Clink was where a number of religious separatists and radicals were sent in the Elizabethan era.

16 The Tower of London

A recurring location in Shakespeare's plays, the Tower saw a number of royal prisoners and executions before and after Shakespeare's time.

1596

Hamnet dies aged 11 while Shakespeare is in London. The Shakespeare family is given a coat of arms the same year.

1597

William Shakespeare buys New Place, the largest residence in Stratford-upon-Avon. *Love's Labour's Lost* is performed for Elizabeth I.

1599

The Globe theatre is opened with a capacity of 3,000. *Julius Caesar* is written and performed this year.

1600

Shakespeare writes *Hamlet*.

1601

William's father John Shakespeare dies.

1603

King James becomes the new patron of Shakespeare's theatre troupe, making them the King's Men.

1604

Othello gets its first performance, although it may have been written earlier.

1605

King Lear is written and performed the following year.

1606

Shakespeare is believed to have written *Macbeth* this year, with allusions to the new king.

1608

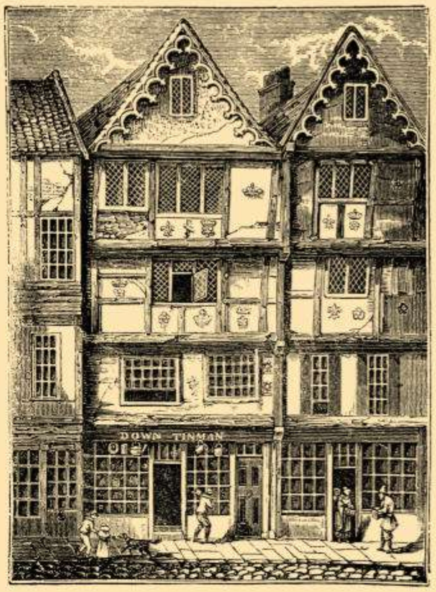
The King's Men perform at Blackfriars, their first indoor venue, allowing for year-round performances. Mary Arden also dies this year.

1613

The Globe theatre burns down following a canon misfiring during a performance of *Henry VIII*.

1616

William Shakespeare dies in Stratford-upon-Avon at the age of 52.



of the Chapel. In this play, Marston was satirised as "Hedon", a "light voluptuous reveller", while Dekker appeared to be Anaides, "a strange arrogating puff". Marston's comeback to this was *What You Will*, (1601) and Jonson replied with *The Poetaster* (1601), with Marston depicted vomiting up all his bombastic language. *Satiromastix* (1601) completed the sequence, with Jonson mocked as "Horace", an arrogant hypocrite.

In hindsight, the 'War of the Theatres' was more akin to a social media spat than a genuine controversy. The frequency with which the plays appeared ensured that the writers' names remained in circulation, while audiences waited eagerly for the next instalment of character demolition, just as modern viewers looked forward to the next episode of TV's *Spitting Image*. Shakespeare, who was not directly involved, does seem to allude to the 'War of the Theatres' in *Hamlet*:

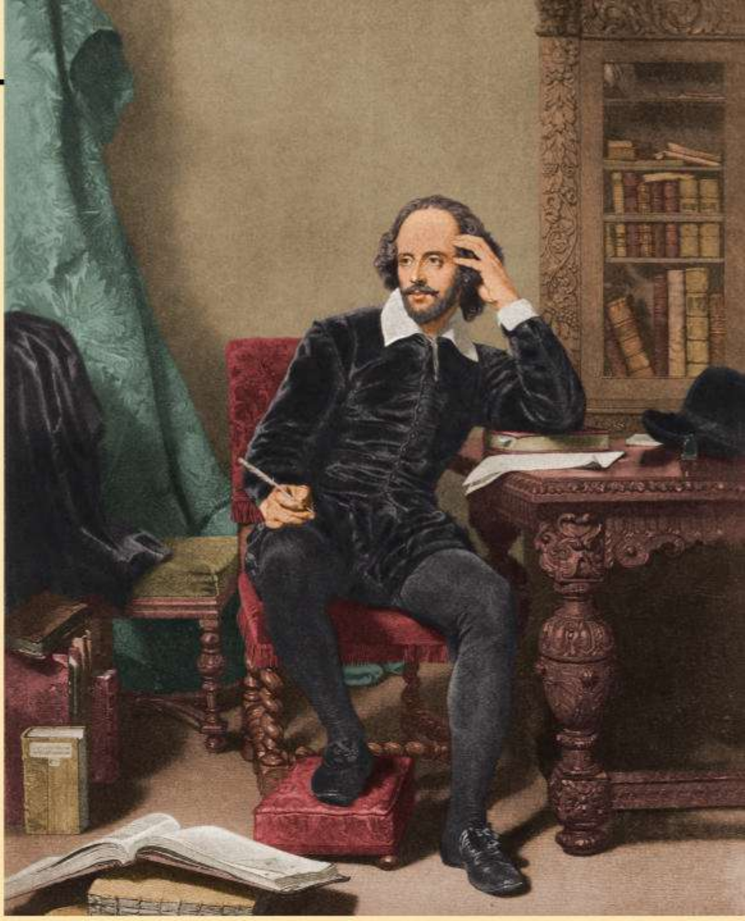
Rosencrantz: ***Fauth, there has been much to do on both sides; and the nation holds it no sin to tar them to controversy: there was, for a while, no money bid argument unless the poet and the player went to cuffs in the question.***
Guildenstern: ***O, there has been much throwing about of brains.***
***Hamlet* Act 2, Scene 2, Lines 362-9**

As for Jonson, he had already survived worse. A former bricklayer and soldier, memorably described by John Aubrey as "a staring Leviathan with a face like the cover of a warming pan and a terrible mouth", Jonson had turned his prison term after *The Isle of Dogs* to effective use and burnished his reputation as a hardman. 1598 saw a positive reception for his *Every Man in his Humour*, but his former cellmate in the Marshalsea, Gabriel Spenser, had developed an implacable hatred of Jonson and sank deeper into drink. Unpopular among the actors, Spenser already had one death on his hands. In 1596, he had stabbed James Feake in the eye during a fight. Feake died in agony three days later. Spenser escaped execution, despite being accused of murder.

On the evening of 22 September 1598, Jonson encountered Spenser in Hoxton Fields in Shoreditch, just around the corner from the Curtain Theatre. The men quarrelled and Spenser challenged Jonson to a duel. Fighting came naturally to both men. Jonson had been a soldier, but as an actor Spenser had trained for fight scenes. All Englishmen had the right to bear arms and lethal swordplay was an everyday occurrence, as illustrated by this exchange between Mercutio and Tybalt in Romeo and Juliet:

No, 'tis not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church-door; but 'tis enough,' twill serve ask for me to-morrow, and you shall find me a grave man.

In terms of weapons, it was scarcely a fair fight. Spenser's sword was ten inches longer, but Spenser had been drinking all day, which gave Jonson the advantage. ▶



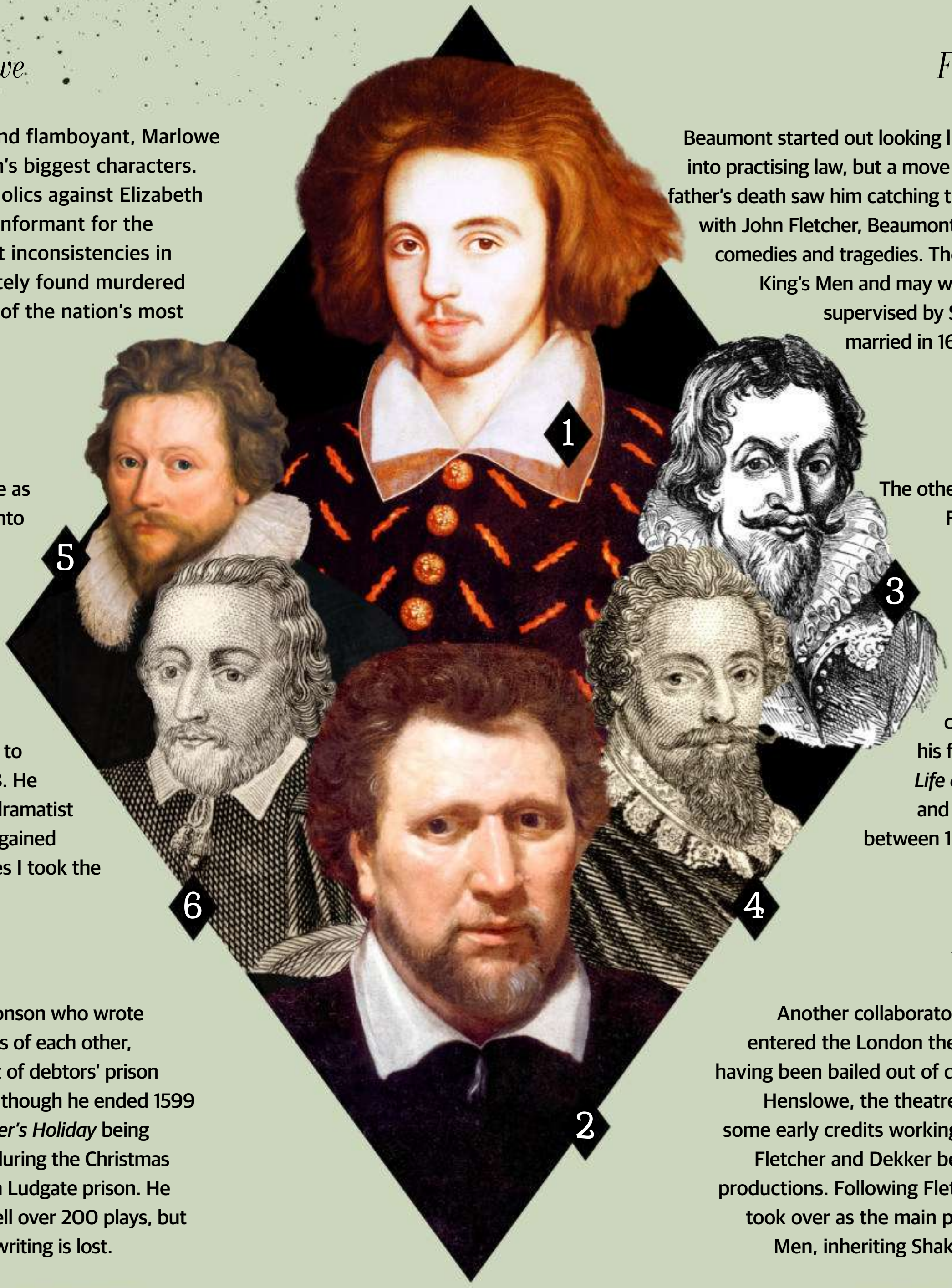
> *"Playwright Ben Jonson faced execution after killing a man but his life was saved by the 'neck verse'*

ABOVE LEFT A typical half-timber building from the Elizabethan streets of London

ABOVE Shakespeare was hailed as "the spirit of the age" by fellow playwright Ben Jonson

The Players

Who's who in the world of Shakespeare



1 Christopher Marlowe

1564-93

Known to be impulsive and flamboyant, Marlowe was one of Tudor London's biggest characters. He had plotted with Catholics against Elizabeth I, became a confidential informant for the government, wrote about inconsistencies in the Bible and was ultimately found murdered in 1593. He was also one of the nation's most celebrated playwrights.

2 Ben Jonson

1572 – 1637

Jonson started working life as a bricklayer before going into the military. He joined an acting troupe after this and began writing. He became close with Shakespeare, making him godfather to his son, but his fiery temper got him in trouble, leading to him killing an actor in 1598. He continued his career as a dramatist and poet, however, and regained favour at court until Charles I took the

3 Thomas Dekker

1572 – 1632

A friend and rival of Ben Jonson who wrote competing satirical versions of each other, Dekker was also in and out of debtors' prison during his career. In fact, although he ended 1599 with his play *The Shoemaker's Holiday* being performed for Elizabeth I during the Christmas season, he had started it in Ludgate prison. He claimed to have written well over 200 plays, but unfortunately most of his writing is lost.

4 Francis Beaumont

c.1584 – 1616

Beaumont started out looking likely to follow his father into practising law, but a move to London following his father's death saw him catching the writing bug. Working with John Fletcher, Beaumont made his name writing comedies and tragedies. They began writing for the King's Men and may well have seen their work supervised by Shakespeare. Beaumont married in 1613 and stopped writing.

5 John Fletcher

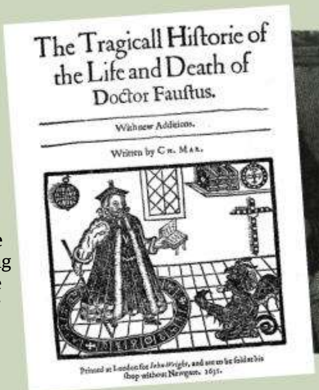
1579 – 1625

The other half of the Beaumont/Fletcher partnership, the pair are thought to have written at least 52 plays together. Shakespeare certainly must have liked Fletcher's contributions as he collaborated with him on his final plays, *Cardenio, The Life of King Henry the Eighth* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* between 1613 and 1614. He died in the 1625 plague.

6 Philip Massinger

c.1583 – 1640

Another collaborator of Fletcher, Massinger entered the London theatre scene around 1613 having been bailed out of debtors' prison by Philip Henslowe, the theatre impresario. He earned some early credits working with other writers like Fletcher and Dekker before authoring his own productions. Following Fletcher's death Massinger took over as the main playwright for the King's Men, inheriting Shakespeare's old company.



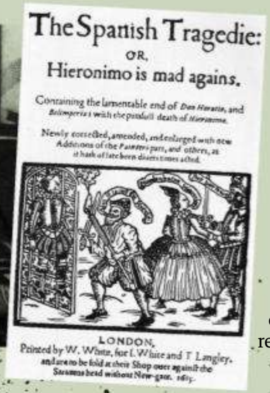
The Tragicall Hiſtorie of
the Life and Death of
Doctor Fauſtus.

With new Additions.

Written by Ch. Mar.

Printed at London for Iohn Wright, and are to be ſold at his
ſhop without Newgate. 1631.

RIGHT Audiences claimed they saw devils live on stage during a performance of Christopher Marlowe's *Dr Faustus*



The Spanish Tragedie:
OR,
Hieronimo is mad againe.

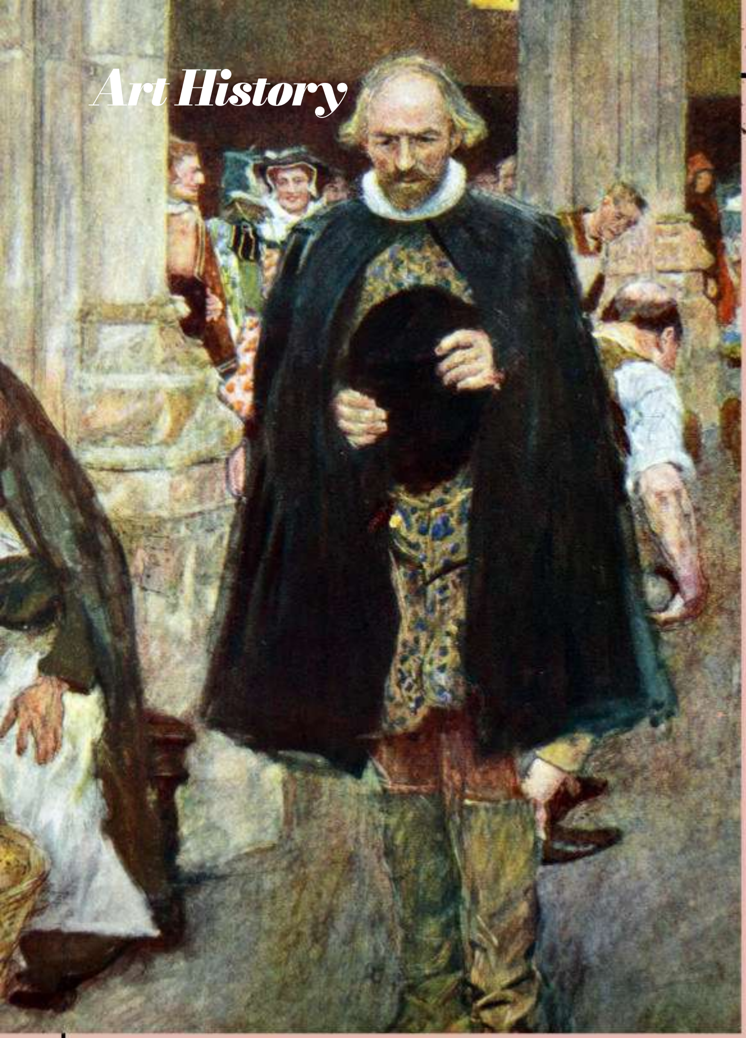
Containing the lamentable end of Don Horatio, and
Belimperia; with the pittifull death of Hieronimo.

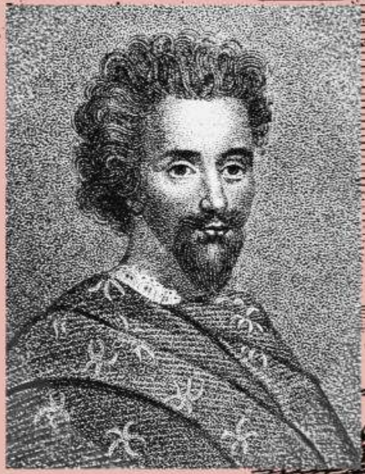
Newly corrected, amended, and enlarged with new
Additions of the Painters part, and others, as
it hath of late been diuers times acted.

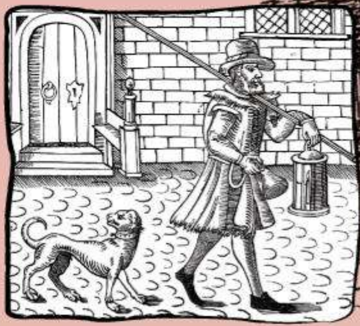
LONDON,
Printed by W. White, for I. White and T. Langley,
and are to be ſold at their Shop ouer againſt the
Sarazens head without New-gate. 1615.

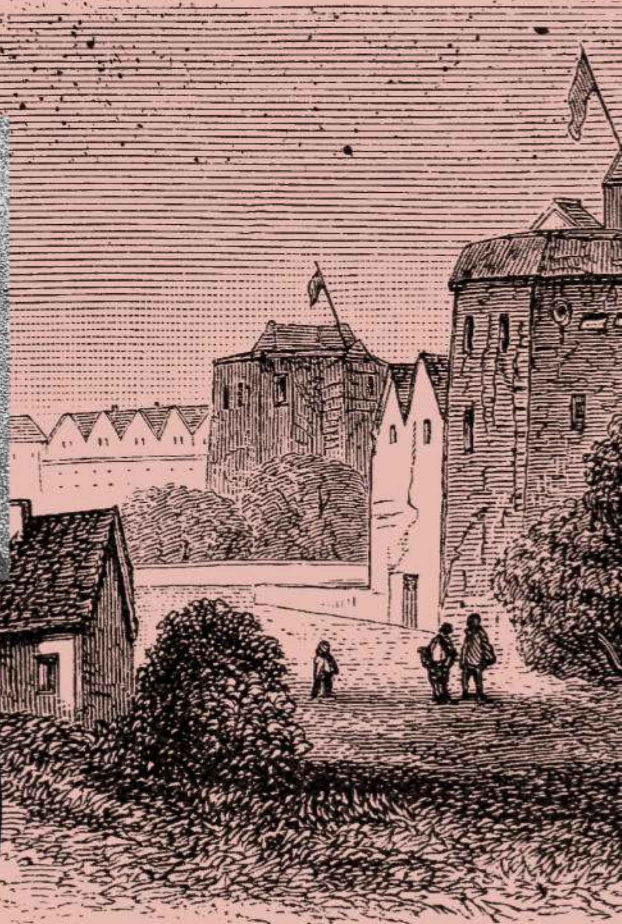
LEFT *The Spanish Tragedy* by Thomas Kyd launched a craze for gory revenge drama

All images: © Getty Images, © Alamy









As Spenser staggered about waving his sword, Jonson swiped back at him and, within minutes, Spenser lay dead.

Despite claiming that he had acted in self-defence, Jonson was arrested, taken to Newgate jail and charged with murder. For all his genius, it looked as if Jonson's final performance was to be upon the scaffold at Tyburn. But his life was saved by means of the 'neck verse'. This legal loophole permitted any man with a working knowledge of Latin to escape execution on the grounds that he was a cleric and therefore immune to secular law. Jonson emerged from Newgate with an 'x' branded on his thumb to prevent him resorting to the 'neck verse' for a second time. The brand was a lasting reminder of his imprisonment, but he had at least escaped with his life, which was more than can be said for Christopher Marlowe.

THE TRIALS OF MARLOWE

Another recipient of Greene's dying rant, Marlowe had taken London by storm with *Tamburlaine*, an epic about a shepherd-turned-warlord. He followed it up with *Dr Faustus*, and audience members swore blind that live devils were conjured up on stage. A man of action like his characters, Marlowe lived dangerously. A mysterious absence from Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, when he was supposed to be studying Holy Orders, led to the university withholding his MA. The university authorities then received a stiff letter from the Privy Council stating that far from loafing, Marlowe had been travelling abroad on "Her Majesty's Service", suggesting that he was a spy. Marlowe was suspected of being a Roman Catholic sympathiser but, according to Charles Nicholl in *The Reckoning: The Murder of Christopher Marlowe*, Marlowe may actually have been spying on his fellow students.

Marlowe continued to be a 'person of interest', keeping controversial company. He spent time with Sir Walter Raleigh, another of Elizabeth's former favourites who'd been consigned to the Tower of London. Raleigh was at the heart of a group known as 'the School of Night', who met up for philosophical and scientific debate inspired by the Renaissance but who were regarded as possible atheists by the authorities.

In London, Marlowe had shared lodging with Thomas Kyd, author of *The Spanish Tragedy*. They were friends and, given Marlowe's open homosexuality, possibly more. In 1593, Kyd's rooms were raided, and the authorities found a page from a leaflet denying the divinity of Christ. Asked to explain the origins of this compromising document, Kyd could only tell his inquisitors that it had been left behind by Marlowe two years earlier. Kyd was tortured to obtain this 'evidence', so he should not be judged too harshly by posterity.

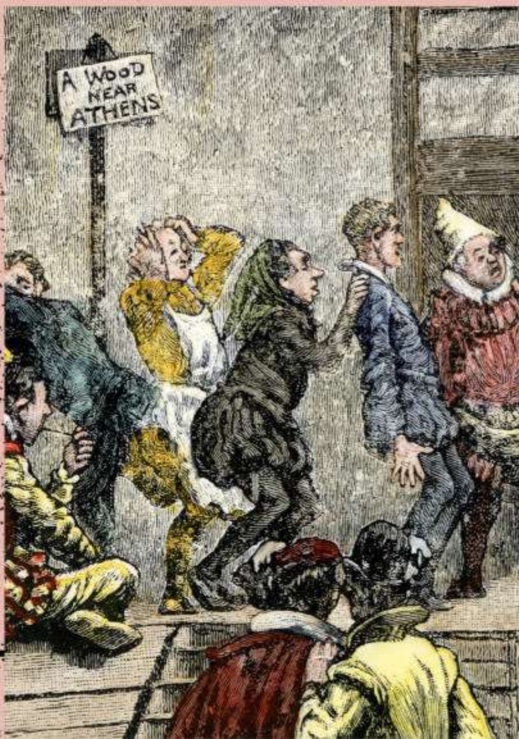
On 18 May 1593 a warrant was issued for Marlowe's arrest, and the charge sheet of allegations against him was considered so important that a copy was sent to the queen. Along with some blasphemous comments about Christ and the Holy Family, other statements have the ring of Marlowe's authentic voice, including the observation that "all they that love not tobacco and boys were fools".

TOP LEFT The bustling streets near the Thames were full of potential inspiration

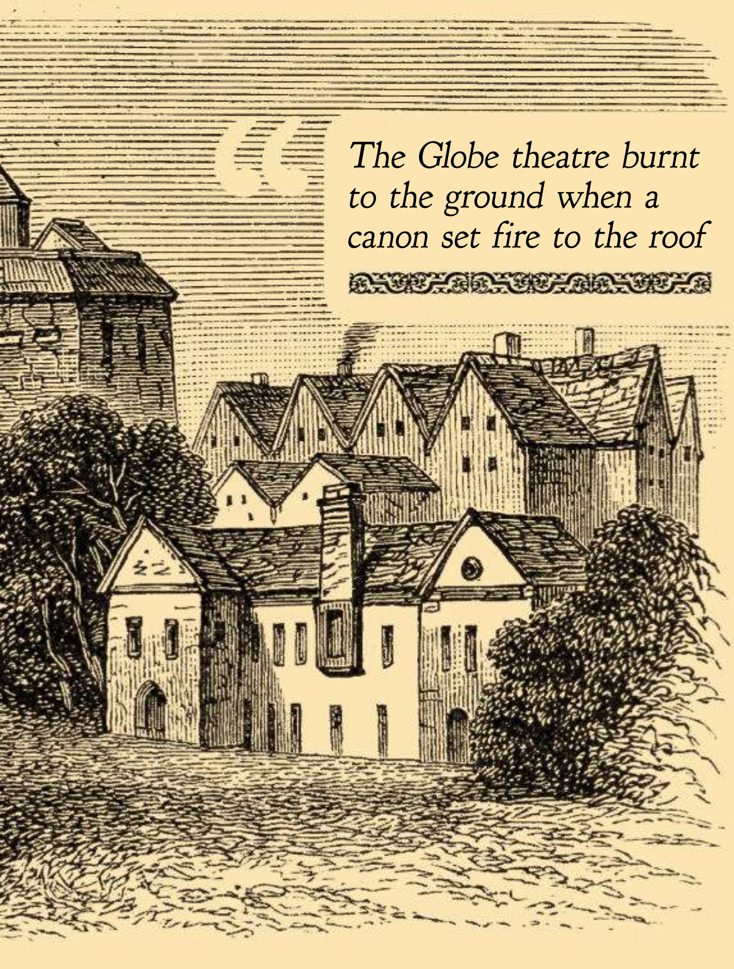
TOP Christopher Marlowe, writer and spy, was stabbed to death in mysterious circumstances

ABOVE Thomas Dekker's *The Bellman of London* portrayed the city's many thieves and beggars

BELOW RIGHT Shakespeare's comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was a huge hit



> *The Globe theatre burnt to the ground when a canon set fire to the roof*



Marlowe appeared before the Privy Council on 18 May, where he was bailed. Unlike Kyd, Marlowe was neither tortured nor remanded; he appears to have been treated more like a witness than a felon.

On 30 May, Marlowe was still on bail when he accepted an invitation to dine with three men at the home of Mistress Eleanor Bull in Deptford. Mistress Bull was a respectable widow who allowed her house to be used as a private dining club, and the invitation had been issued by three acquaintances believed to have been spies: Ingram Frizer, Nicholas Sheres and Robert Poley. Marlowe may have had his doubts about the meeting, but went to Deptford anyway, and dined with the three men. After dinner they walked in the garden, and drank wine, deep in discussion. At around six o' clock in the evening, all four trooped back into the house and ate supper – fish in a pastry 'coffin' prepared for them by Mistress Bull. What happened next has been a matter of conjecture for centuries. At some point there was a violent altercation, and Marlowe was stabbed in the head. The blade of the dagger penetrated his eye and, in the words of the coroner, "the aforesaid Christopher Marlowe then instantly died". The coroner went on to record the verdict that Frizer had stabbed Marlowe in self-defence after a quarrel about the bill – 'the reckoning' – a version of events that has been disputed for many years.

Given Marlowe's secret service connections and his hitherto charmed life, it seems as if the row about the bill was no more than a cover-up for an aborted operation, as Nicholl suggests. Perhaps the meeting at Mistress Bull's house had included an offer to drop the charges in return for one last mission. Some have even suggested that Marlowe faked his death and escaped to Italy. We will never know.

A day after he died, Marlowe was buried in the churchyard at Deptford. An echo of his fate may be heard in that cryptic reference to "a great reckoning in a little room" in Shakespeare's *As You Like It.*

ABOVE A view of Shakespeare's Globe as envisaged by a Victorian illustrator

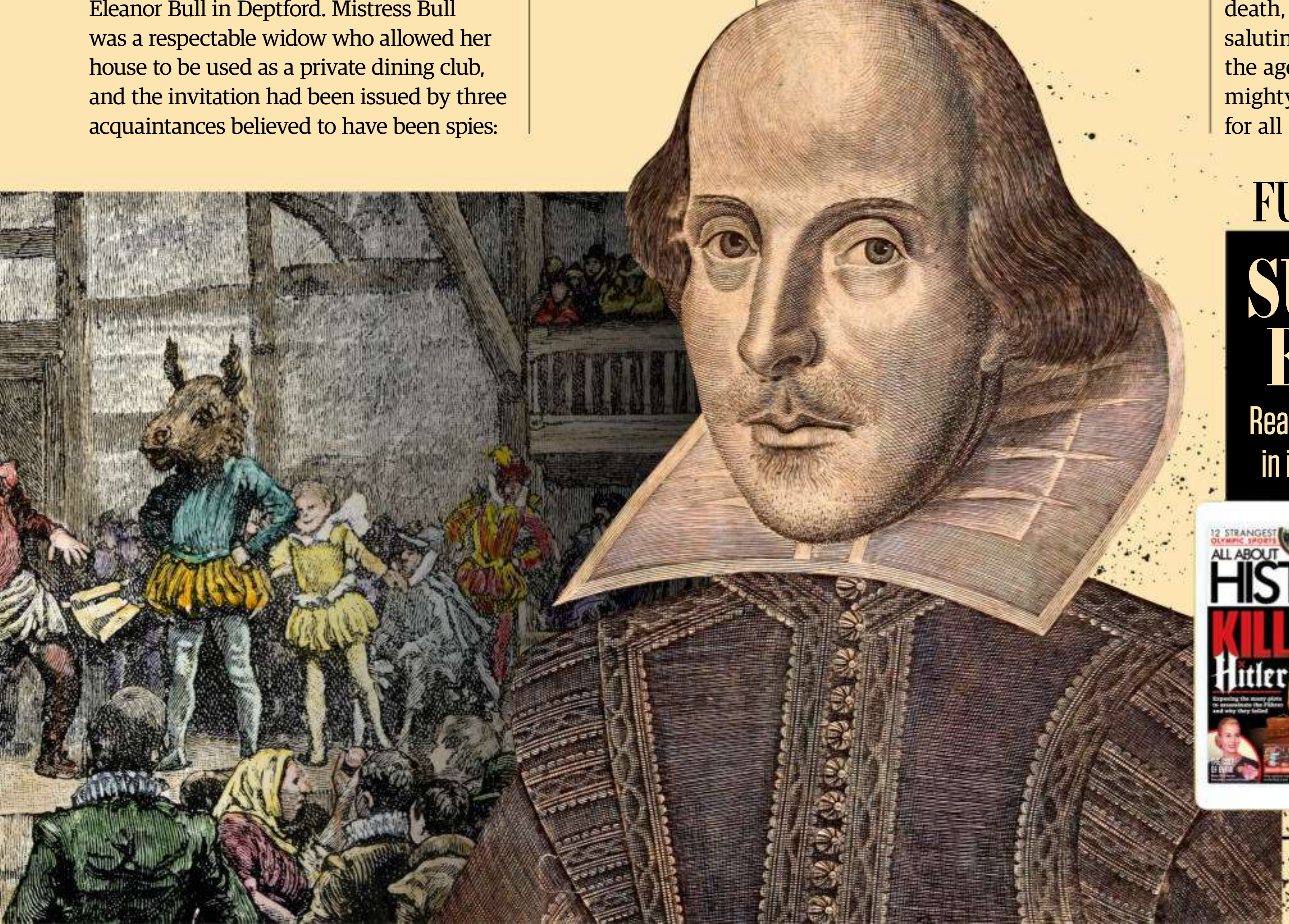
BELOW Shakespeare as he appears in the *First Folio* (1623) collection of plays, published after his death

THE GLOBE

Unlike Marlowe, Shakespeare remained committed to his craft, overcoming one huge obstacle. Following the death of Burbage in 1597, the owners of the land where the Theatre stood threatened to pull it down. Burbage's sons, Richard and Cuthbert, dismantled the Theatre and, with an army of volunteers, including one 'WS', transported the timbers across the Thames. There, near Maiden Lane in Southwark, it was rebuilt and, as the Globe, became the most famous theatre in London. Here, some of Shakespeare's greatest plays were staged, from *Henry V* to *Hamlet*. But on St Peter's Day 1613 tragedy struck during a performance of *Henry VIII*. A spark from a canon set fire to the thatched roof and the Globe burnt to the ground. There were no casualties, although one man's breeches caught fire and had to be put out with a tankard of ale.

Despite this terrible setback, the Globe was rebuilt, but Shakespeare was growing older and spent less time in London. He died in Stratford in 1616, shortly after a birthday dinner attended by Jonson.

If Greene had intended to curse Shakespeare in *A Groat's Worth of Wit,* it rebounded. Greene died in poverty, Marlowe was murdered and Nashe disappeared from view around 1600. Most surprising of all, Jonson ended his days as Poet Laureate and was buried in Westminster Abbey. Not bad for a bricklayer with a face like a warming pan. Following Shakespeare's death, Jonson composed an epitaph saluting Shakespeare as "the spirit of the age", outshining Kyd, and "Marlowe's mighty line, He was not of an age, but for all time!" ○



FURTHER READING

SUBSCRIBER EXCLUSIVE

Read more about Shakespeare's life in issue 145 via our digital archive

SCAN HERE ↓

12 STRANGEST OLYMPIC SPORTS
THE QUEER VICTORIANS
ALL ABOUT HISTORY
KILL Hitler

All images: © Getty Images, © Alamy

James Baldwin

POET OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

This author, essayist, playwright, poet, activist and wit used his work to challenge prejudice

Written by **Callum McKelvie**

> "An artist is a sort of emotional or spiritual historian. His role is to make you realise the doom and glory of knowing who you are and what you are. He has to tell, because nobody else can tell, what it is like to be alive."
> – JAMES BALDWIN

As a queer Black man born in America during the 1920s, James Baldwin experienced much hatred and discrimination. A novelist, essayist, playwright and poet, from the start he used writing to explore and challenge difficult themes, both personally and socially. His first novel, 1953's *Go Tell It On The Mountain*, tackled both religion and his own troubled upbringing, while the second, 1956's *Giovanni's Room*, explored the taboo subject of homosexual romance. Perhaps most notably, time and again he used his pen as a means to confront what he called the "racial nightmare" that plagued America. Yet Baldwin's legacy is far more than just his words. He worked alongside the Civil Rights movement, participated in the 1963 March on Washington, travelled extensively, taught and lived life to the fullest. But this exceptional story begins on a very ordinary street in Harlem… ▶

Main image: © Alamy

INTERVIEWEES

© Herb Boyd

HERB BOYD

Herb is a journalist, author, teacher and activist. He is the author of *Baldwin's Harlem: A Biography of James Baldwin,* available from Atria Books, alongside other works such as *Black Detroit: A People's History of Self-Determination* (Amistad, 2017) and the award-winning anthology *Brotherman* (One World, 1996) edited alongside Robert L Allen.

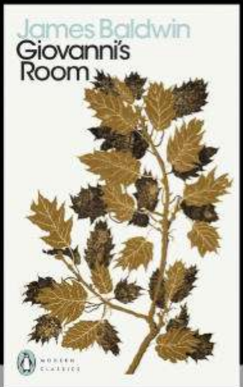
© Justin Clynes

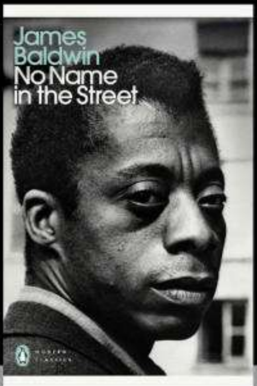
MATT BRIM

Matt is professor of Queer Studies at the Centre for LGBTQ Studies at the City University of New York. He is the author of *James Baldwin and the Queer Imagination* (University of Michigan Press, 2014) and *Poor Queer Studies: Confronting Elitism in the University* (Bloomsbury, 2020).

Baldwin's bookshelf

Five of the writer's most memorable literary works


James Baldwin
Giovanni's Room
MODERN CLASSICS


James Baldwin
No Name in the Street
MODERN CLASSICS

Giovanni's Room

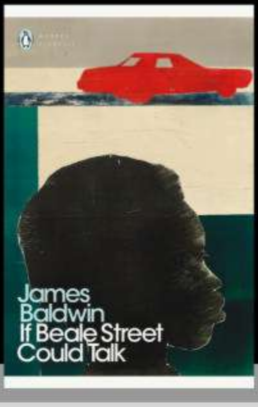
1956

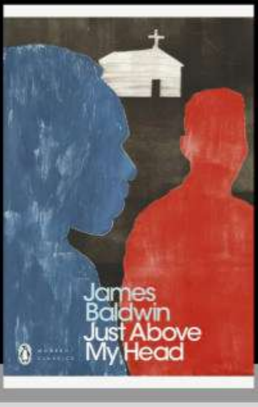
Baldwin's second novel was controversial for its tackling of homosexual themes. The novel concerns David who, after his girlfriend leaves for Spain, is left alone in Paris. He begins a relationship with an Italian-bartender called Giovanni but the romance ultimately ends in tragedy as David is unable to reconcile his own feelings.

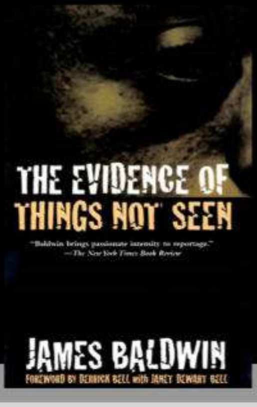
No Name in the Street

1972

Baldwin's fourth memoir reflects on the assassination of Martin Luther King, his immense grief at the loss and his own feelings regarding the Civil Rights movement. He also covers a variety of other influential figures and moments including Malcolm X, Francisco Franco, the Marches for Freedom and McCarthyism.


MODERN CLASSICS
James Baldwin
If Beale Street Could Talk


James Baldwin
Just Above My Head
MODERN CLASSICS


THE EVIDENCE OF THINGS NOT SEEN
"Baldwin brings passionate intensity to reportage." —The New York Times Book Review
JAMES BALDWIN
FOREWORD BY DERRICK BELL with JANET DEWART BELL

If Beale Street Could Talk

1974

Set in Harlem, *If Beale Street Could Talk* is both a romance and a tale of suffering and heartbreak. It tells of the developing love story between a young Black woman, Tish, and a young Black man, Fonny. However, tragedy occurs when a corrupt police officer falsely accuses Fonny of rape.

Just Above My Head

1979

Baldwin's last novel is an epic tale of the life of a group of friends and returns to some of the themes of his earlier works. Covering 30 years, the friends begin preaching in Harlem churches but must undergo a maelstrom of war, violence and incest, all while witnessing historical events such as the struggle for civil rights.

Evidence of Things Not Seen

1985

One of Baldwin's final works, *The Evidence of Things Not Seen* is an essay that focuses on the Atlanta Child Murders of 1979-81. However, Baldwin also probes deeper, examining racial issues in the area and in the United States as a whole.

Book covers source: Amazon x5

Birth of a poet

Baldwin was born on 2 August 1924 in Harlem Hospital, New York City. For three years, his mother Emma Beardis-Jones raised the young boy on her own while simultaneously working as a cleaner. She never revealed the name of his birth father and when James was around three years old she married David Baldwin, a Baptist preacher from New Orleans.

Whereas Baldwin's relationship with his mother was warm and loving, the relationship with his stepfather (who he often referred to as his father) was strained to say the least. In *Notes Of A Native Son*, he described him as "indescribably cruel in his personal life" and the "most bitter man I have ever met." But Baldwin also stated that his father's race had "been the cause of much humiliation and it had fixed bleak boundaries to his life."

There was nothing in Baldwin's background to suggest he would go on to become one of the defining voices of the 20th century. "Perhaps we can't understand how a child who should not be able to do what James Baldwin did does it," says Matt Brim, author of *James Baldwin and the Queer Imagination*. "And maybe that's called genius. Because he was this incredible individual who, where there was no way, created one."

From an early age he devoured stories and developed a passion for culture. "There is certainly no solid evidence of the literary bug in his pedigree, though it can't be determined if that didn't exist elsewhere in his genome," says Herb Boyd, activist and

Images: © Getty Images, © Alamy

author of *Baldwin's Harlem: A Biography of James Baldwin*. "He had a coterie of teachers and counsellors as he came of age, caretakers who introduced him to the arts, literature, and film." One of these, school teacher Orilla Miller, took him on excursions to the theatre and cinema, while Baldwin himself claimed to have read every book in the local library.

Nevertheless, his stepfather's influence led Baldwin to work as a teenage preacher from the age of 14 to 17 – something he would explore in *Go Tell It On The Mountain*. According to the National Museum of African American Culture, his "brief experience in the church would have a sustained impact on his rhetorical style and on the themes, symbols and biblical allusions in his writings."

The road of a writer

In 1943, David Baldwin passed away of tuberculosis. He had spent the year before his death in a psychiatric institution after suffering increasing bouts of paranoia. Towards the end of his life he had become convinced that his own family were behind a plot to poison him. On the day of his father's death, Baldwin, now 19 years old, also witnessed the birth of his eighth sibling.

For some time Baldwin had worked hard to financially support his large family. Now, he made the difficult decision to forego college in order to earn a living. In the day he worked a variety of menial jobs, packing meat or at construction sites. He worked on his writing at night, sometimes going until dawn. This began a habit that would remain with him for the rest of his life. "I write at night. After the day is over, and supper is over, I begin, and work until about three or four am," Baldwin later told *The Paris Review*.

In 1944 Baldwin met the African-American author Richard Wright, famous for his 1940 novel *Native Son*. Wright was intrigued by the aspiring writer and acted as a mentor to the young man. Four years later he assisted him in securing a life-changing grant that enabled him, at the age of 24, to move to Paris and begin work on his first novel. The pair would later fall out following Baldwin's criticisms of Wright's work and were unreconciled upon the latter's death in 1961.

In Paris and in Switzerland, over the course of five years, Baldwin wrote his first novel, the aforementioned *Go Tell It On The Mountain*. These initial years in Europe developed a taste in Baldwin for foreign travel, and the subsequent 40 years of Baldwin's life were spent abroad, primarily in Europe but also in later years in Turkey.

"There was nothing in James Baldwin's background to suggest he would go on to become one of the defining voices of the 20th century"

"His ventures abroad played a critical role in his personal, literary and political development," Boyd states. "France, and particularly Paris, liberated him in a number of ways, freeing him from the limitations imposed in the States."

Giovanni's Room

In 1956, Baldwin unleashed his second novel, *Giovanni's Room*, upon the world. The story proved to be controversial for a number of reasons but primarily because it told a story of repressed sexuality. There were also no Black characters, something that troubled his usual publisher Knopf. According to the *New Yorker*, they informed Baldwin that he was a "Negro writer" who "cannot afford to alienate that audience" and that they would not publish *Giovanni's Room* "as a favour" .

But Baldwin often refuted the framing of the novel as being about homosexuality.

"This is a novel about what happens when you fail to love," Brim explains. "There is a kind of universalising perspective that he was trying to get at. He was using the story of David and Giovanni as a universalising poetic. That was his philosophy."

Despite the controversy, the book was successful and earned favourable reviews. Of *Giovanni's Room*, Baldwin later stated: "if I hadn't written that book I probably would have had to stop writing altogether." But what of Baldwin's own attitudes towards sexuality? Despite being open regarding ▶

BELOW LEFT Baldwin with actor Diana Sands and director Burgess Meredith following the premiere of his 1964 play *Blues for Mr Charlie*

BIRMINGHAM
CHILDREN

BELOW MIDDLE Baldwin with fellow activist Bayard Rustin. Due to their homosexuality they were forbidden to speak at the 1963 March on Washington

BELOW Baldwin, fourth from left, attending the Selma to Montgomery Civil Rights March his own queerness, Baldwin never referred to himself as gay, and of the word homosexual he stated: "That didn't quite cover what it was I was beginning to feel. Even when I began to realise things about myself, about who I was and what I was likely to become, it was still very personal, absolutely personal."

"Baldwin had a philosophy about his own identity, that it was to be worn like a loose robe," says Brim. "He was very aware of his multiple identities, subjectivities, positionings, first and foremost through race and class. His lifelong project was to go in search of his name, to go in search of his identity."

Witnessing history

But despite his growing success as a novelist, events in his home country would soon spur him to leave his newfound home and return to the United States. "He found it necessary to leave France and personally get involved in the Civil Rights movement," Boyd explains.

Baldwin arrived back in the USA in 1957 and his first destination was a journey deep into the heart of the American South. Here he met Civil Rights leader Martin Luther King for the first time, though the two would have a tumultuous relationship. During this time he also wrote two articles, *A Hard Kind of Courage* and *A Letter from the South*, both later reprinted in his second collection of essays, *Nobody Knows My Name: More Notes of a Native Son,* in 1961. The first was Baldwin's account of his meeting with Gus Roberts, one of the first Black children to attend a previously all-white school. Despite the sometimes troubling nature of his visit, Baldwin would return to the South many times.

When discussing his relationship to the Civil Rights movement, Baldwin preferred to consider himself a witness. As a writer, he believed his role was to properly document the struggle and to make sure it made it to print. Upon the publication of *Nobody Knows My Name*, King wrote to Baldwin and praised his ability to properly present the facts: "Your analysis of the problem is always creative and penetrating. Your honesty and courage in telling the truth to white Americans, even if it hurts, is most impressive."

But Baldwin did not exclusively observe. Two years following its publication, Baldwin would take part in the historic March on Washington. He also travelled around the States, as well as to Paris and London, giving lectures, and appearing on television and (along with other Black writers and intellectuals) met with Robert F Kennedy. Unfortunately, at both the March on Washington and the Selma March, Baldwin did not receive an invitation to speak. According to the National Museum of African American History and Culture, this was likely due to the homophobia present in the movement.

The Fire Next Time

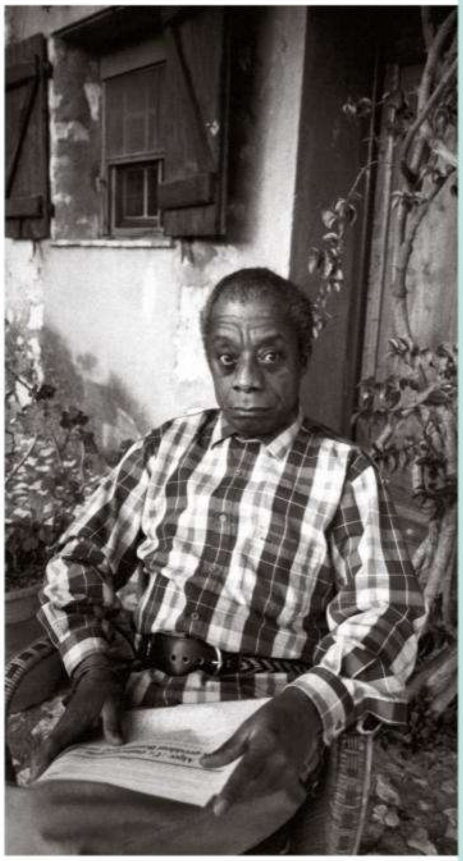
By the time he became a successful novelist, Baldwin had already made a name for himself as a journalist and essayist of note. His first collection of essays, *Notes Of A Native Son*, had been released in 1955 to great acclaim. Throughout his career he would pen a number of essays, many focussing on racial issues in America.

Perhaps Baldwin's most famous non-fiction work is *The Fire Next Time*, published in 1963. The book comprises two essays, *My Dungeon Shook: A Letter to my Nephew on the One Hundredth Anniversary of Emancipation* and *Down at the Cross: Letter from a Region in my Mind*. As the title of the former suggests, it was originally a letter written to Baldwin's 15-year-old nephew and published in *Progressive* magazine. It's a tough, raw discussion of the challenges facing the young Black man but one that is touching too.

The Fire Next Time propelled Baldwin to a level of fame that his previous works had

BELOW LEFT Baldwin pictured in bed in 1963 with his lover Lucien Happesberger

BELOW RIGHT At his home in the South of France in 1983



Malcolm, Martin & James

Baldwin was heavily involved in the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s – but what was his relationship like with its leaders?

James Baldwin's relationship with Malcolm X and Martin Luther King was complex. It not only changed as he grew to know both leaders but also as both leaders' own views and opinions shifted and evolved.

Baldwin was known to have a friendship with King as well as deep respect for the Civil Rights leader. However over the years they did disagree on certain issues. It's possible as well that Baldwin's sexuality, similar to King's relationship with fellow activist Bayard Rustin, may have also alienated him slightly. Baldwin was not invited to speak at the March on Washington, with King supposedly stating the author was "too inflammatory".

Baldwin's relationship with Malcolm X also changed following the latter's return from Mecca. This was an important moment in Malcolm X's life where his views softened somewhat, as he became convinced of Islam's ability to unite people of different races. Malcolm X supposedly told Baldwin: "I'm the warrior of the revolution and you are the poet."

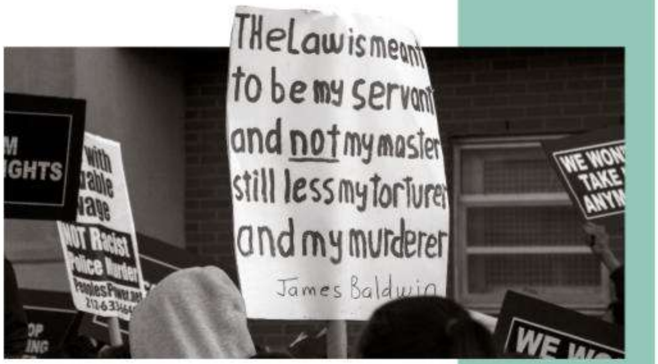
"James was friends and associates of both leaders, Martin perhaps more so than Malcolm," Boyd explains. "It was only after Malcolm left the NOI [Nation of Islam] that James found Malcolm a bit more approachable. He tried to come to grips with Malcolm's life and legacy during work on a screenplay but that never flowered. It was easier for him to relate to Martin because of his leadership in the Civil Rights movement that commanded James's attention in the mid-sixties and early seventies."

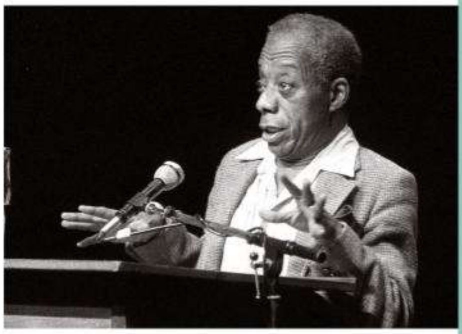
> "Unhappily, one only has to look at the news to realise there is still much that Baldwin can teach us about ourselves and each other"

been unable to reach. Despite the fact that he would often consider himself first and foremost to be a novelist, the success of the book meant that in the mind of the public he was now primarily an essayist. "The power of his essays is indisputable," Brim says. "It is not just the power of his ideas, but also his expression in those essays that I think makes them truly timeless. He is one of the 20th century's great essayists and polemicists."

Legacy and lessons

Baldwin spent much of his later years in St Paul de Vence in the South of France, where he finally ceased his wandering and purchased a small stone house. For the following 16 years he continued to write but also spent a great deal of his time teaching and lecturing in the United States. On the 1 December 1987, he passed away at the age of 63 at his home from stomach cancer.





ABOVE Baldwin's lessons continue to inspire. This photo was taken at a protest following the shooting of Akai Gurley in 2014

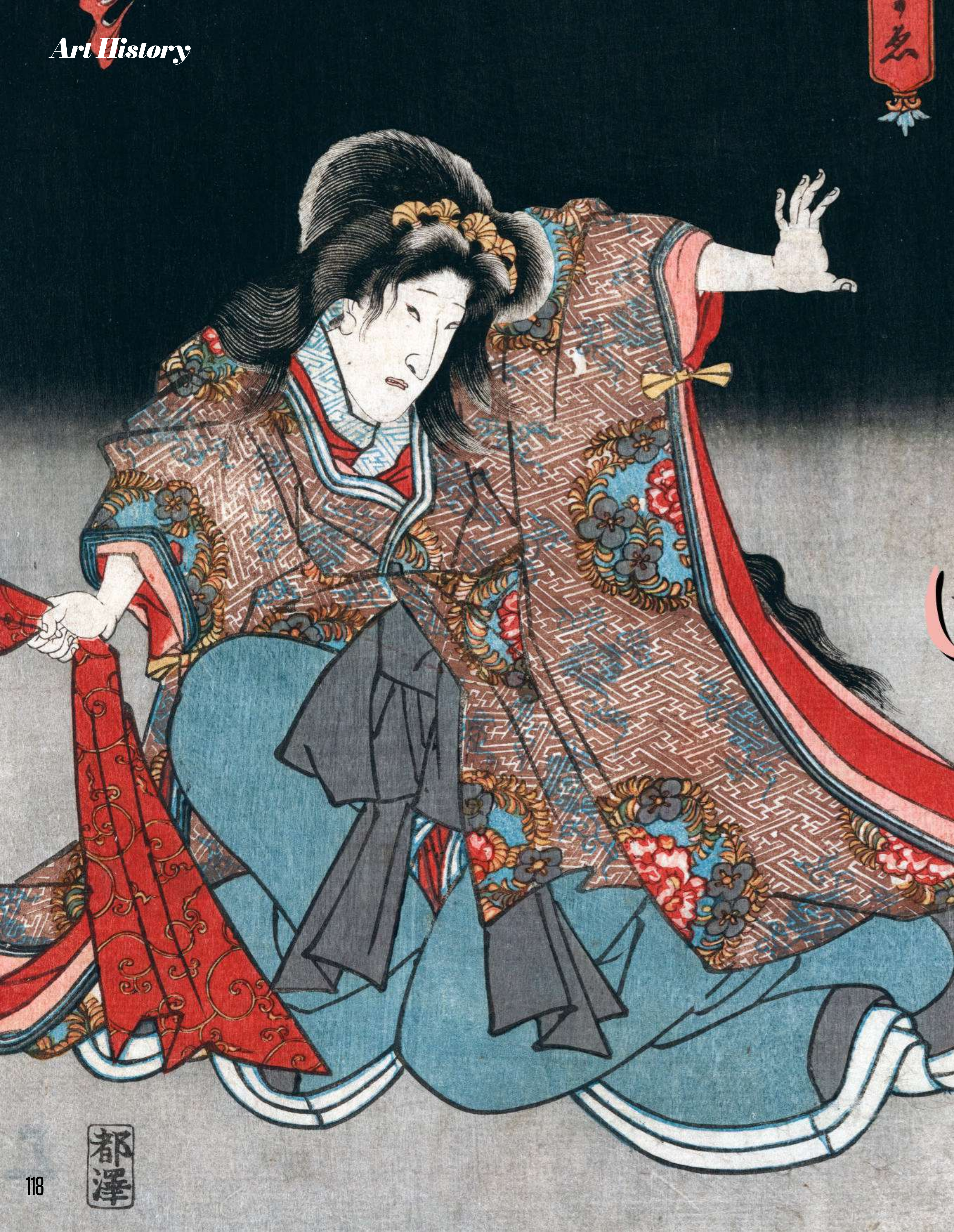
LEFT Towards the end of his life he spent much of his time lecturing and teaching

Nearly 40 years have passed since his death, yet his voice continues to resonate. "Let me say in conclusion," states Boyd, "that James was a clarion voice for his people and any body of thinkers devoted to the struggle for total freedom and expression. He was a potent writer, a deep thinker, with an unquenchable thirst for knowledge and wisdom. He can be emulated, imitated but never duplicated."

Unhappily, one only has to look at the news to realise there is still much that Baldwin can teach us about ourselves and each other. Yet it is a testament to his brilliance that much of his writing remains profound and impactful to this day. There is a rawness and honesty in all his work that not only reflects the troubled times he lived in but says much of love, life and loss. It is both personal and yet universal.

"You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read," said Baldwin. "It was books that taught me that the things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, who had ever been alive."

All images: © Getty Images, © Alamy


都澤

ORIGINS OF Kabuki

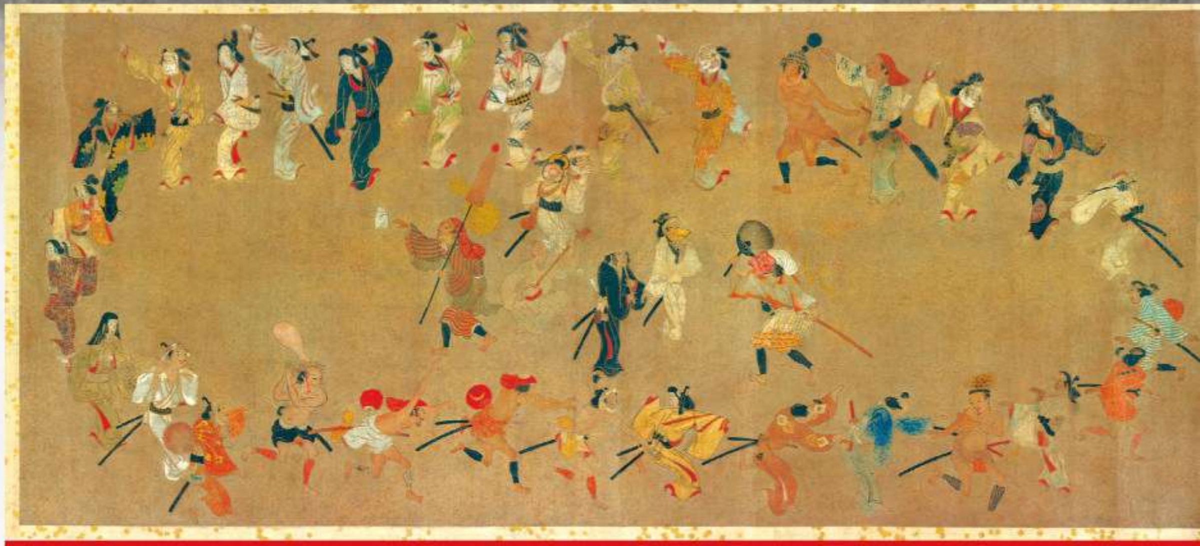
Explore the tumultuous history of one of Japan's most famous art forms

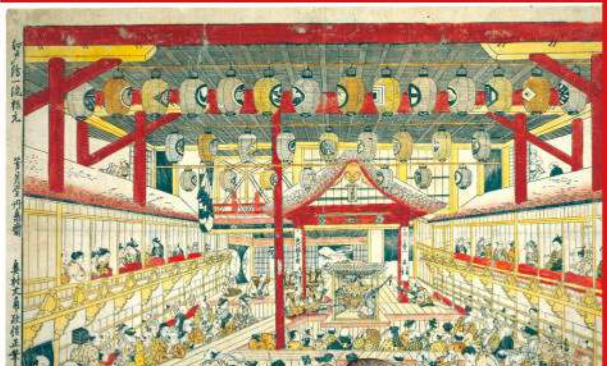
Written by Jonathan Gordon

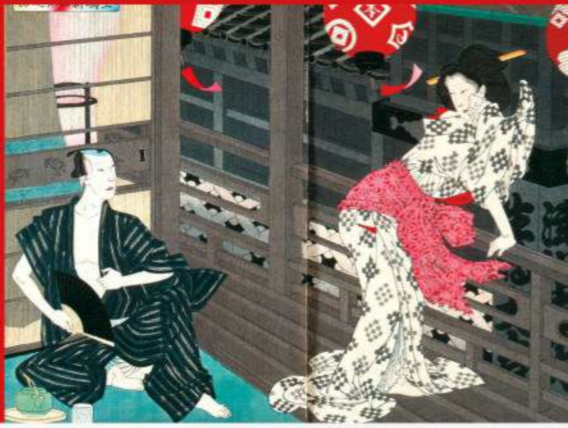
Considered today to be one of the cornerstones of Japanese entertainment history, kabuki was born out of a long tradition of folk dance and performance in towns and villages. Japan experienced a cultural uplift in the late 16th century as the Sengoku (warring states) period came to an end, and as the age of the shogunate dawned at the turn of the 17th century the merchant classes flourished, bringing greater prosperity to many who'd been struggling. As a result, traditional theatrical forms such as noh (dance drama), kyogen (comic theatre) and bunraku (puppet theatre) all saw greater patronage.

As Tokugawa Ieyasu came to power in 1603 (beginning the Edo period) we also have our first recorded kabuki performance from the woman who is believed to have originated the style. Izumo no Okuni is understood to have been a shrine maiden and she combined a number of classic festival dances with scenes from other styles of theatre to entertain patrons in Kyoto. She called it kabuki-odori, with 'ka' meaning song, 'bu' meaning dance, 'ki' meaning skill and odori being a form of free dancing, often performed at festivals. As such, kabuki was a combination of dramatic and rhythmic dancing alongside narrative storytelling, ▶

© Getty Images







ABOVE-MIDDLE A 1745 print showing a packed crowd at a kabuki show

ABOVE A statue in Kyoto of Izumo no Okuni, the originator of kabuki

less refined than noh, but more familiar to common folk.

As Okuni built up a following in Kyoto she gathered together a troupe of fellow female dancers to join her and put on shows in other locations. Their performances were accompanied by a flute and drum, which was similar to noh theatre. One story they played out was that of a young man (all the roles were still played by women) attending a teahouse and being entertained by dancers performing an odori. Okuni also adapted a ghost story into her troupe's repertoire, with the spirit attending a teahouse to be entertained before it can return to the underworld. Okuni may well have played the role of a priest performing this dance, which was likely quite provocative, and it seems kabuki quickly gained a reputation for being shocking and unusual. Its name, while breaking down into related terms, was also taken from kabukimono, which was a term that referred to wayward street gangs of wandering samurai. It seems that Okuni welcomed this relatively risque, rebellious image.

New groups of onna-kabuki (women's kabuki) began to form, and the three-stringed guitar – the shamisen – was incorporated into the acts, becoming an essential part of the show by 1610. Troupes had also begun to spread out from Kyoto and were appearing in Edo (now Tokyo) and Osaka as well as other parts of the country. Saruwaka Kanzaburo opened Edo's first kabuki theatre in 1624; situated near the imperial palace, kabuki finally caught the attention of the bakufu, the military government of the shogun.

By this point kabuki shows had become like variety acts, lasting most of the day, and could be raucous. Japanese scholars have described this early form of kabuki as being like a banquet or festival experience. The bimonthly programme of shows even followed the calendar of social events. What's more, actors would address the audience directly and interact with them, removing the separation that existed in other staged entertainment forms. However, fighting among the audience and accusations that some of the performers were also sex workers led the bakufu to ban women from performing kabuki in 1629.

By this point, troupes of young men (wakashu-kabuki) had begun performing kabuki shows, but the accusations of prostitution and a growing fear that this new form of entertainment was a corrupting influence saw them banned in 1652. Yet this prohibition apparently did little to dampen the public's enthusiasm for these lively, humorous and colourful shows, with even upper-class members of Japanese society, such as samurai, attending events. To protect their reputations, they would watch from private boxes and wear veils over their faces.

Older male performers filled the void left by women and younger men being forced off the kabuki stage, leading to the development of yaro-kabuki, the dominant form to this day. They started to draw their stories from the more respectable noh theatre, perhaps tempering some of the more controversial aspects of previous shows. From this also emerged the role of the onnagata, or female impersonator, yet that translation doesn't quite do the role justice as it evolved into a highly revered art form. A leading figure in this development was Yoshizawa Ayame I (1673 – 1729) who was so committed to the role of onnagata that he apparently spent his day-to-day life in makeup and costume, taking what we would now call a 'method acting' approach. Such was Ayame's dedication, other onnagata would often be publicly shamed for not being in character in public if they were recognised.

The onnagata was a form of idealised femininity and was hugely influential in Japanese society as the Edo era saw massive changes to culture and customs. The costumes, makeup and even mannerisms of the onnagata could set fashion trends for women – an interesting cultural and social feedback loop appears to have been constructed.

Some level of respectability had been attained by kabuki theatre by the Genroku period (1688 – 1704), by which time merchants had become richer and urban centres like Kyoto, Osaka and Edo had grown in population. However, as a new century developed, new controversy would hit kabuki.

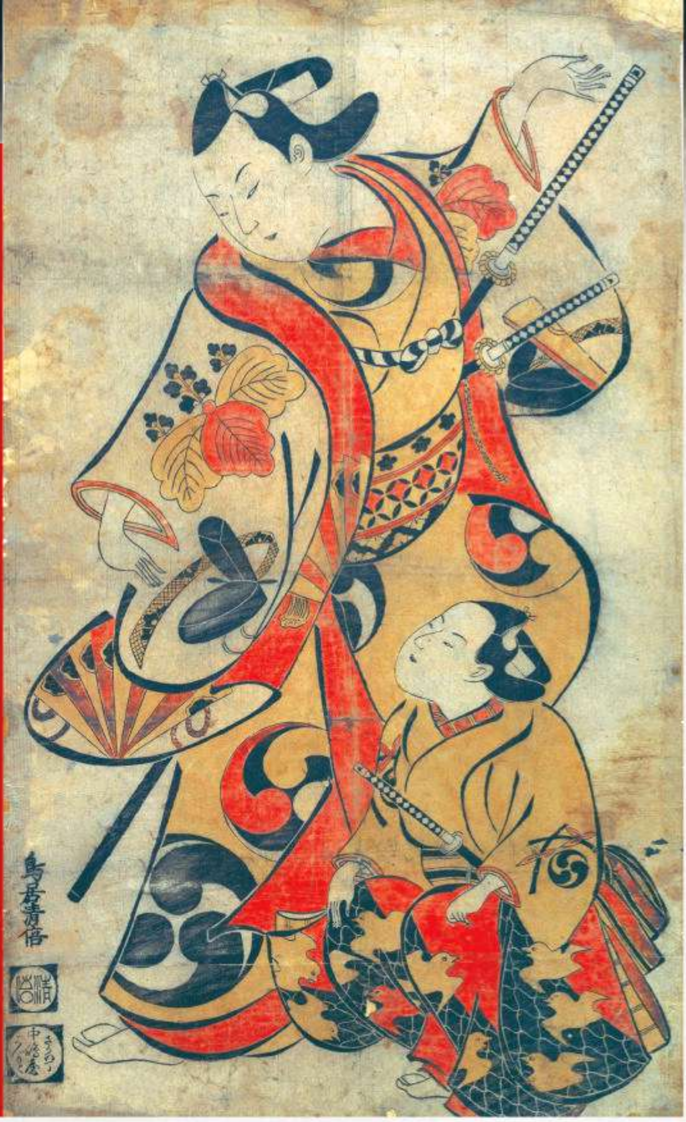
On the surface, the Ejima-Ikushima affair seems relatively innocuous, but it caused a scandal at the time. Ejima was a member of the Ōoku – the shogun's

All images: © Alamy, © Getty Images

TOP-LEFT A classic odori folk dance, which was incorporated into early kabuki

MIDDLE-LEFT This print depicts Lady Ejima and actor Ikushima Shingoro

LEFT Actor Yoshizawa Ayame, who developed the onnagata role, performing as a samurai



> “KABUKI SHOWS HAD BECOME LIKE VARIETY ACTS, LASTING MOST OF THE DAY, AND COULD BE RAUCOUS”

harem – and in February 1714 she left the imperial castle to visit two temples and then attend a kabuki show in a theatre named Yamamuraza. After the entertainment she asked actor Ikushima Shingoro and others to join her at a tea house. However, Ejima had a strict curfew and, enjoying her evening, she was late returning to the castle. This infraction kickstarted a power struggle in the palace of shogun Tokugawa Ietsugu: Ejima was arrested and barely escaped execution, Ikushima was exiled, and the theatre was destroyed. Some 1,000 people are believed to have been caught up in the aftermath of this affair. As a result, kabuki theatres were forced from central Edo into outer regions, and late-evening performances were abandoned to retain some level of respectability.

Kabuki seems to have been viewed as a barely tolerable social ill. Actors were considered among the lowest social classes; they were restricted in where they could live and were treated as little more than beggars or sex workers. The authorities were determined to keep kabuki theatres as far away from government quarters and respectable districts as possible, yet the popularity of kabuki was undeniable.

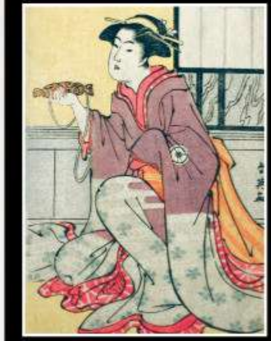
Despite these blows to its reputation, kabuki managed to avoid the further wrath of officials and pushed forward with more developments. One important addition, bringing greater spectacle to kabuki, was the use of clever mechanical techniques. Namiki Shozo (1730-73) was one of the important figures in this movement, introducing cable systems that allowed actors to fly through the air, hinged roofs to bring set design on and off stage, and trap doors for quick scene changes and exciting entrances or exits for actors.

Two of the lasting acting styles of kabuki also began to take shape. Aragoto, meaning ‘rough business’, emerged, making use of the highly stylised dance of odori and the puppet movements that had been imitated from bunraku shows. They would wear bold makeup (called kumadori) and big costumes to make themselves as imposing as possible. Actors performing aragoto roles would exaggerate their movements and would typically play outlaws or playboys. Ichikawa Danjuro

▶

Famous Plays

Five standout kabuki stories

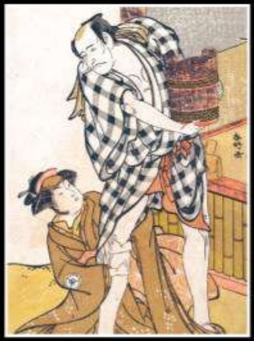


SUGAWARA DENJU TENARAI KAGAMI

(Sugawara and the Secrets of Calligraphy)

Premier: 1746

A historical play about the statesman Sugawara no Michizane, who was betrayed by Fujiwara no Shihei and exiled from court. In one particularly dramatic scene, a character performs seppuku – ritual suicide.

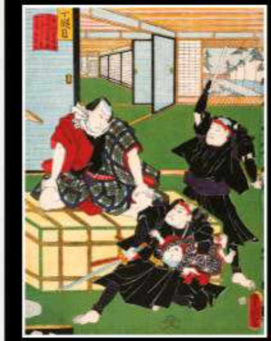


YOSHITSUNE SENBON ZAKURA

(Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees)

Premier: 1747

Another historical tale, this time involving the remnants of the Heike clan, which was almost wiped out. Main character Minamoto no Yoshitsune splits from his brother and is pursued by Taira no Tomomori, who’s seeking revenge.

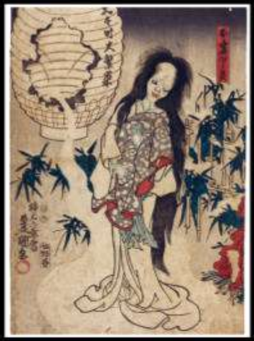


KANADEHON CHUSHINGURA

(The Treasury of Loyal Retainers)

Premier: 1748

Probably the most famous historical drama of Japanese theatre, it is better known in the West as the story of the 47 ronin and has been adapted in a number of mediums. It tells the story of betrayed samurai seeking revenge.

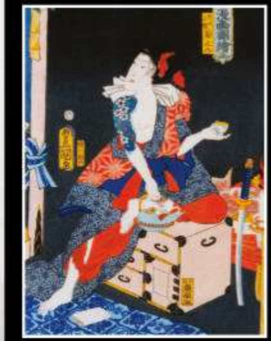


TOKAIDO YOTSUYA KAIDAN

(Ghost Story of Yotsuya)

Premier: 1825

Primarily a ghost story, this is also a tale driven by betrayal and revenge. Oiwa is poisoned and returns from the dead to torment her evil husband, while her surviving sister also seeks retribution for her murdered sibling.

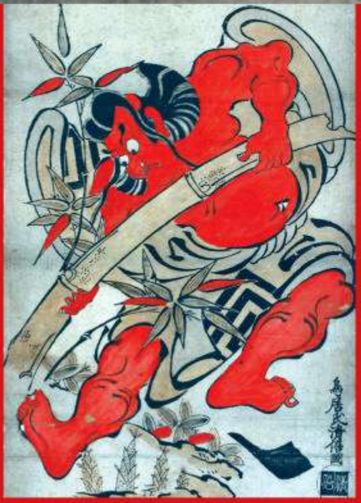


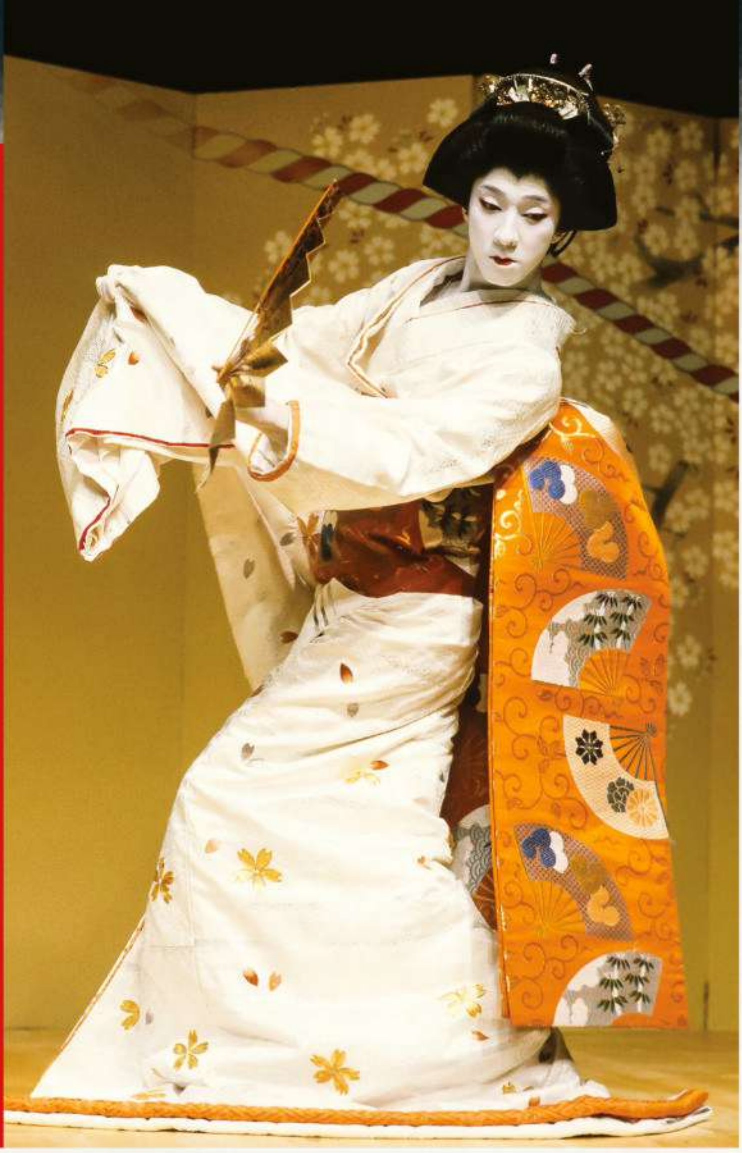
AOTOZOSHI HANA NO NISHIKIE

(The Five Thieves)

Premier: 1862

Sometimes also known as *Benton Kozo*, one of the titular thieves, two scenes stand out and are regularly performed today. One sees Benton Kozo disguised as a samurai’s daughter and the other depicts a meeting of the thieves.





ABOVE Bando Tamasaburo V displays the classic onnagata role in a New York performance, 1984

ABOVE-LEFT A print showing Ichikawa Danjuro I playing strongman Takenuki Goro. Below is a photo of his most recent successor, Ichikawa Danjuro XIII, in 2024

(1660 - 1704) was one of the actors who helped to define these roles, and that name has become one handed down through the family. There are many Ichikawa Danjuros through kabuki and acting history in Japan, as there are many other important acting lineages.

The counterpart to aragoto was wagoto, meaning 'soft business'. These slender, simply dressed performers in pale makeup played wistful, romantic characters such as once-influential men now struggling financially or jilted lovers. Sakata Tojuro I (1647 - 1709) was an actor known for these kinds of romantic leads. Many kabuki stories looked to pair these two types of character for dramatic contrast. As actors became more famous and popular among the public, and their lineage took shape, they were increasingly seen in the company of high officials, even visiting their homes.

> "HISTORICAL TALES GREW IN POPULARITY, SUCH AS THE FAMOUS STORY OF THE 47 RONIN"

As the acting and staging of kabuki grew in sophistication, so did the repertoire of stories that were performed. Historical tales grew in popularity, such as the famous story of the 47 ronin who avenged their murdered master in 1703, which became the famous kabuki play *Kanadehon Chushingura* (1748). These plays were called jidai-mono, while stories that reflected the daily lives of common folk were called sewa-mono. Theatres would often perform these two types of play one after the other in that order, with an interlude of dancing involving ghosts, courtesans or exotic creatures. A full card of performances would end with the ogiri shosagoto, or dance finale, involving the whole cast.

Kabuki plays also tended to follow a moral thread that saw the wicked punished and the virtuous rewarded, and the morality of these tales draws heavily from Buddhism and Confucianism. Additionally, tragic stories tended to come from desire and love conflicting with duty, with duty typically winning out.

The early 19th century was another period of change for Japan as the Edo period came to an end. There was a relaxing of the rules for daily life and art flourished once more. Kabuki began to develop further as audiences looked for more entertainment. Fabric printing techniques had also improved and costumes became more flamboyant and colourful in keeping with the stories being told. As well as printing on fabric, kabuki had long had a relationship with woodblock printing, known as ukiyo-e. Prints were commissioned to be used as advertisements for the plays, which is why so many popular prints from Japan actually depict scenes from kabuki stories. The Osaka School, established in the 1830s, worked exclusively on prints of kabuki actors, helping to make them even more famous.

This era of increased freedoms was cut short by the Tempo Reforms, with kabuki being suppressed by 1842. The theatres in Edo were all relocated from the city to what was then still its outskirts, Asakusa. What's more, a leading figure in the theatre, Ichikawa Ebizo V, was prosecuted for his luxurious lifestyle and driven out of the city. Kabuki declined a little, but the strict reforms were deeply unpopular and didn't last. It wasn't long before theatre-goers were again making the trip to Asakusa to watch plays.

Still, the efforts to make kabuki more respectable continued and the more formal style of kabuki that exists today emerged from these changes. The late 19th century saw the Engeki Kairyo Undo (Theatrical Performance Reform Movement) trying to make kabuki more suitable and appealing to the Japanese elite classes. This culminated in 1887 when Mutsuhito, the Meiji emperor, attended a kabuki performance.

The following year, in 1888, the law prohibiting women from performing on stage was relaxed, but women did not return to kabuki as it maintained its commitment to the role of onnagata. Kabuki has evolved alongside this role, and playing with the concept of gender is often part of the subtext of the story. Women have gradually become involved in some performances, but the gender gap in Japanese theatre is still an openly discussed issue. Actress Terajima Shinobu, herself the daughter of a kabuki star, made headlines as recently as 2023 when she took to the stage at Kabukiza in Tokyo, a theatre opened in 1889.

Kabuki remains an evolving and reflective art form, developing new plays based on Manga and Anime as well as continuing to bring classic Edo stories to audiences. The form is not as popular as it once was, but despite its troubled origins it remains synonymous with Japanese culture.

All images: © Alamy, © Getty Images

DISCOVER THE PAST!

www.historyanswers.co.uk

WHAT IF D-DAY FAILED
ALL ABOUT HISTORY
INSIDE NOR
Uncover the se and their p
CODPIECE FEVER
And more medieval men's fashions
PLUS INDIGENOUS ARCT THE HISTORY OF
AMERICA'S FIRST SER
WHAT WAS THE BABA YAGA?
MAKING TIT
Uncover the flaws and tragic brave
WHAT IF HENRY VIII DIED YOUNG?
How the Tudors could have collapsed early
ALL ABOUT HISTORY
DOWNTONS IN DECLINE
Why stately homes nearly vanished
THE BLACK DEATH
From miasma to miracles: how medieval medicine desperately battled the bubonic plague
VIETNAM WAR ESSENTIAL GUIDE
THE COLLAPSE OF THE MAGYARS
10 CURIOUS STATE VISIT STORIES
AFRICAN FOLKLORE
What can we learn from mythic tales?
LAND OF THE RISING GUN
When the samurai embraced firearms
FORGING FRANCE
The king who built a nation

Available from all good newsagents and supermarkets

ALL ABOUT HISTORY™

CRUCIAL EVENTS

END SEGREGATED RULES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
WE DEMAND VOTING RIGHTS NOW!
JOBS FOR ALL NOW!

ILLUSTRATIONS

KEY PEOPLE

GREATEST BATTLES

PAST CULTURES

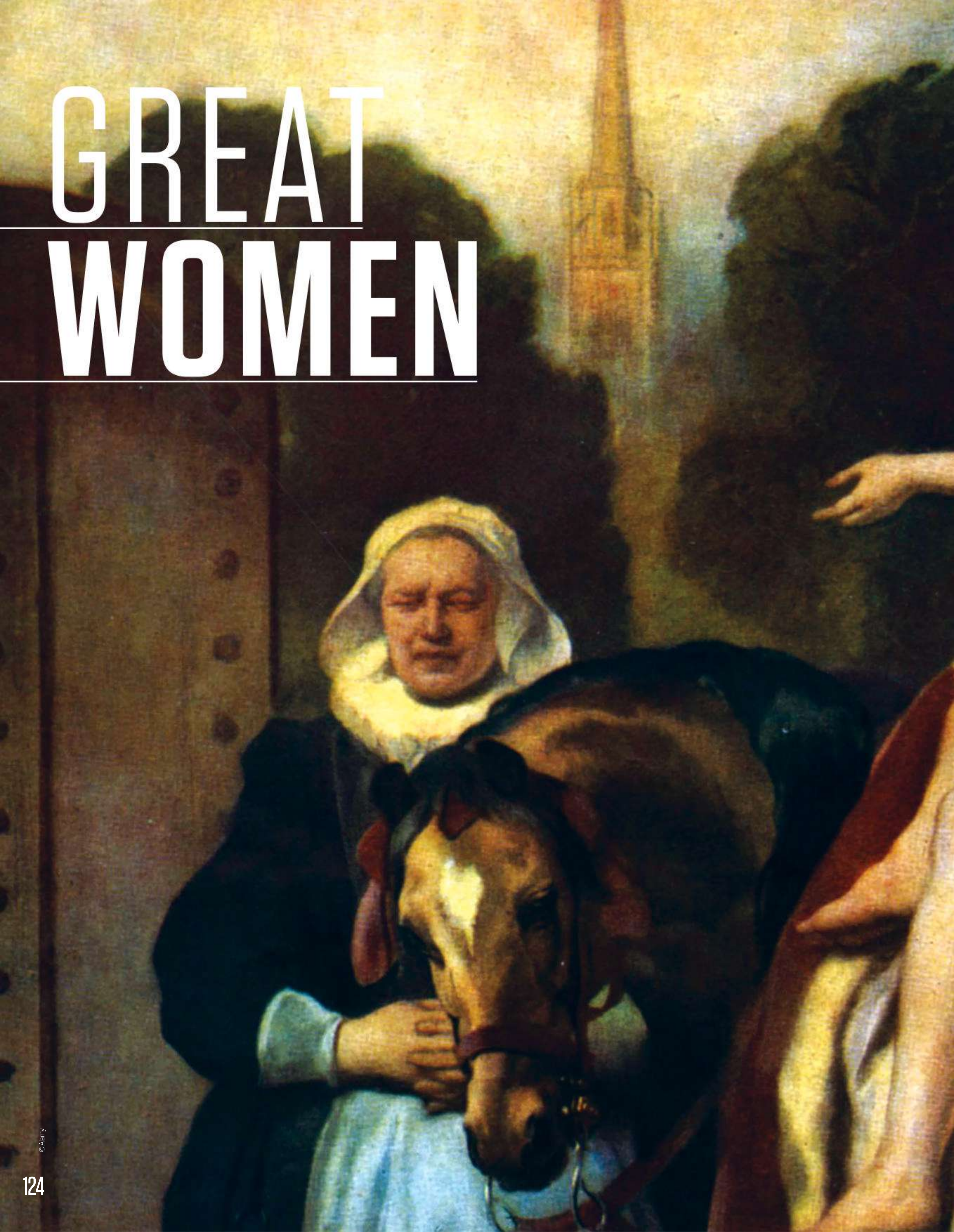
BUY YOUR ISSUE TODAY

Print and digital subscriptions available at

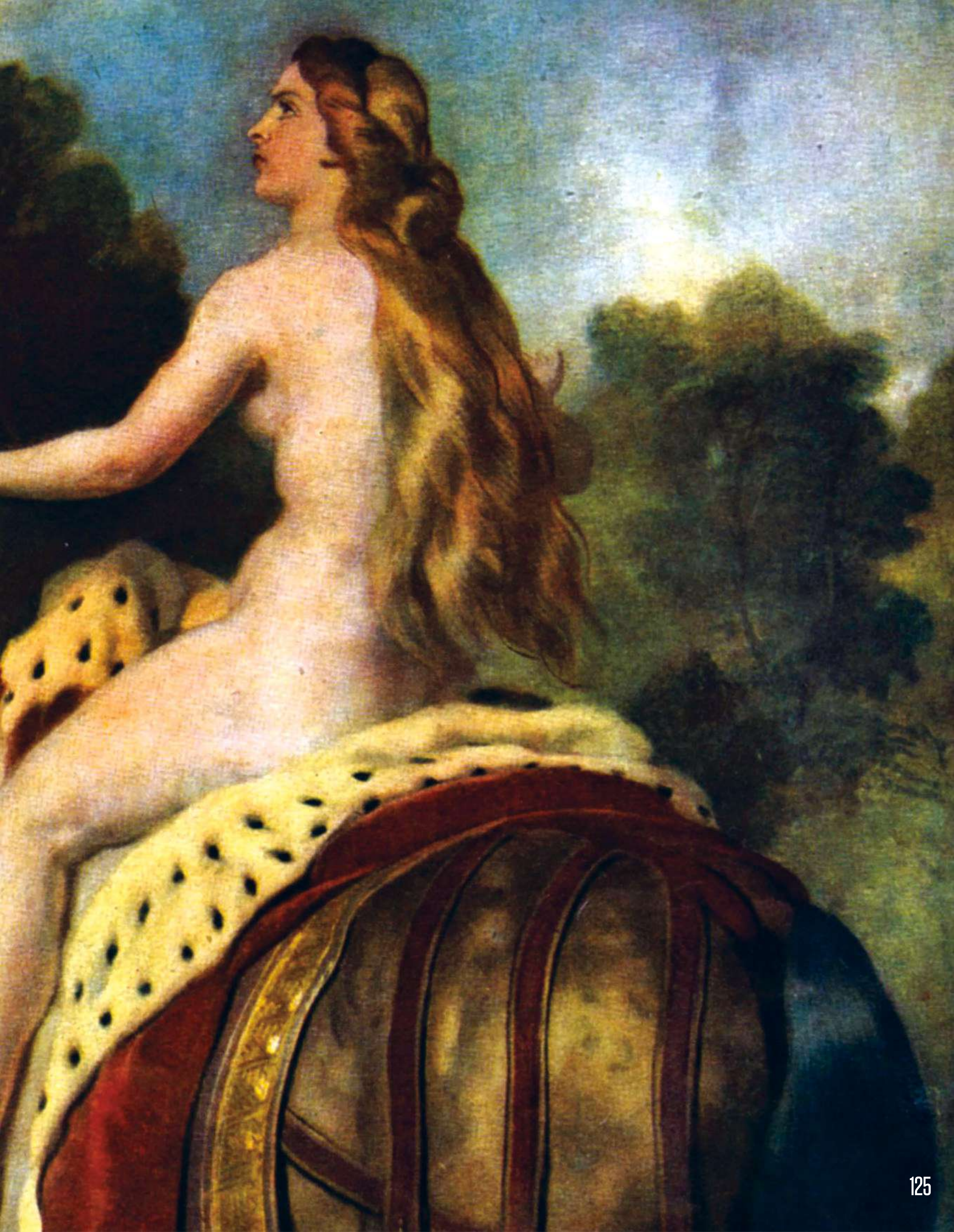
www.magazinesdirect.com

Be part of history historyanswers.co.uk Share your views and opinions online Facebook /AllAboutHistory X @AboutHistoryMag

GREAT WOMEN



© Alamy



The Legend of LADY GODIVA

How the story of a naked noblewoman on horseback became one of England's most pervasive myths

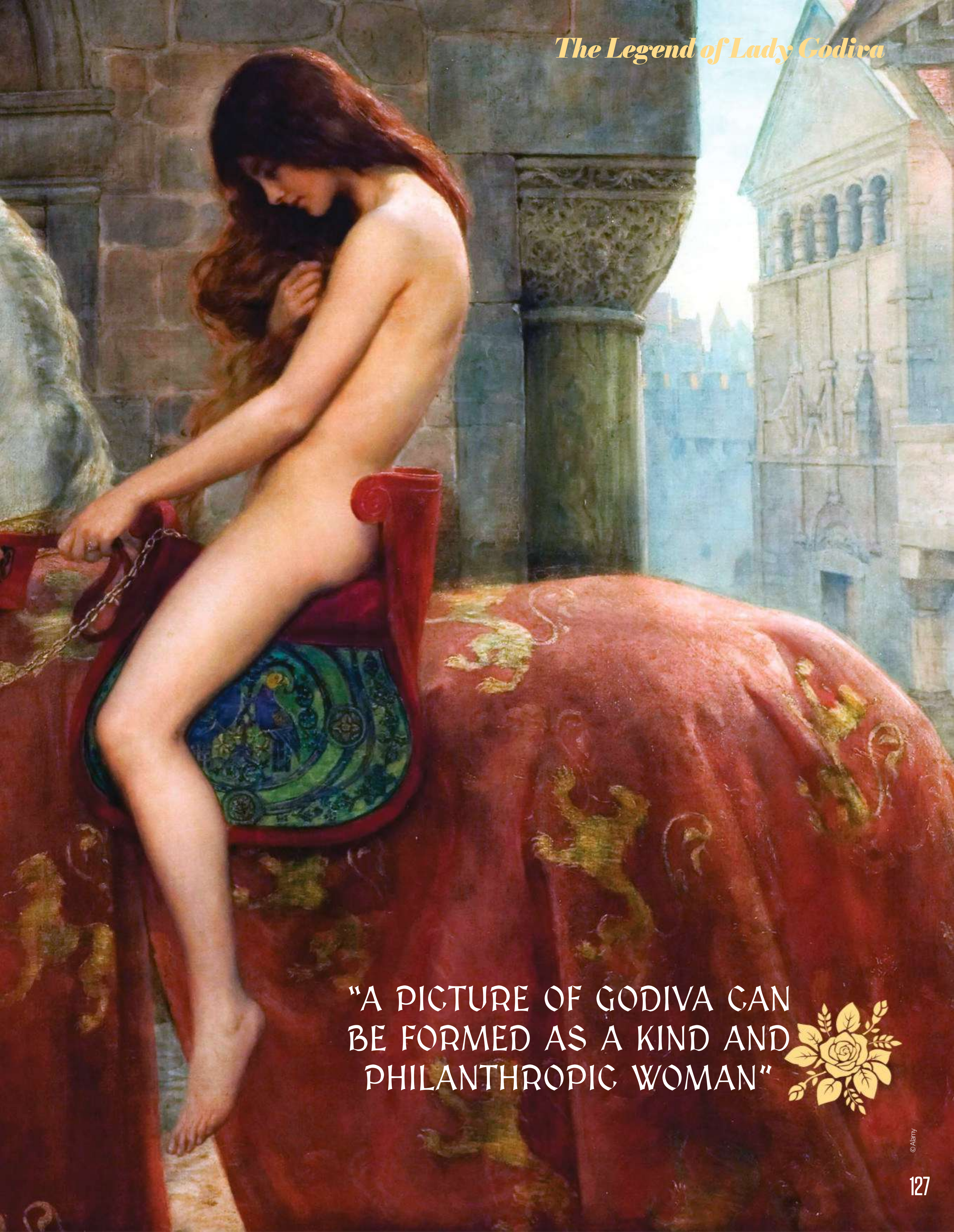
Written by Emily Staniforth

In the mid-11th century, the parsimonious Earl of Mercia ruled over Coventry and nearby towns and villages in the west Midlands of Anglo-Saxon England. He'd imposed a heavy tax on the people of Coventry, one that his wife, Lady Godiva, found to be greatly unjust. She begged and pleaded with him to repeal the tax, but to no avail.

Godiva continued to petition the earl day after day, week after week, until finally he answered her demands with a proposition. He suggested that if Godiva was willing to undress, mount her horse and ride naked through the streets of Coventry, from one end of the town's market to the other, he would acquiesce to her wishes. Godiva, determined to do whatever was necessary to help her people, agreed to her husband's demand.

Godiva issued a proclamation to the residents of Coventry, asking them to shut their doors and stay inside their houses as she paraded through the streets. Then, honouring her word, she stripped off and mounted her steed. Her long and luscious hair was let down and cascaded down her body, protecting her dignity from potential onlookers. She set off, accompanied by two knights, and as she rode through Coventry the people of the town obeyed her command and shut themselves away, refusing to look upon Godiva as she passed by.

The ride passed without incident and Godiva returned to her husband to claim her prize. Shocked that his wife had



"A PICTURE OF GODIVA CAN BE FORMED AS A KIND AND PHILANTHROPIC WOMAN"

© Alamy

Peeping Tom

This mischievous character did not appear in the legend until the 17th century

There have been many additions and changes to the Godiva story over the centuries, but none have made such a permanent impression as the inclusion of the character known as Peeping Tom. The previously unknown character was added to the story of Lady Godiva's ride some time during the 17th century and became such a compelling aspect of the tale that his presence remained steadfast in later retellings of the legend.

The adapted story tells of Tom the Tailor, a resident of Coventry, hearing of Lady Godiva's proclamation asking the townspeople not to look at her as she rode through the market. Shut away in his house, Tom, however, was unable to resist the temptation to take a peek at the nude noblewoman as she passed by. But when he peeped through the shutters of his window, he didn't catch a glimpse of Godiva and instead was instantly struck blind as punishment for his lechery. And so the legend of Peeping Tom was born.

Some historians have argued that the story of Peeping Tom and his dishonourable behaviour was added to the tale to help provide a moral angle to the myth. By failing to respect the honour and virtue of Godiva, he was punished by a higher power. However, other researchers have theorised that the character was added to the story as a result of a painting from 1586 that supposedly depicts a shadowy figure watching Godiva's ride from an upstairs window.

Either way, Peeping Tom has arguably become a bigger star in modern society than the legend's protagonist. The term 'Peeping Tom' has become a common expression in the English language and is defined by the *Merriam-Webster* dictionary as "a pruriently prying person" or "voyeur".

fulfilled her side of the bargain, the earl had little choice but to put an end to the oppressive tax and free the people of Coventry from their financial burden.

This tale has, over the centuries, become one of Britain's best-loved historical legends, akin to the stories of Robin Hood and King Arthur. Like these other mythical tales, the legend of Lady Godiva is rooted in fact – but how much of it is actually true and how much has been invented over the years? And how did this story of feminine courage and determination become so ingrained in British popular imagination?

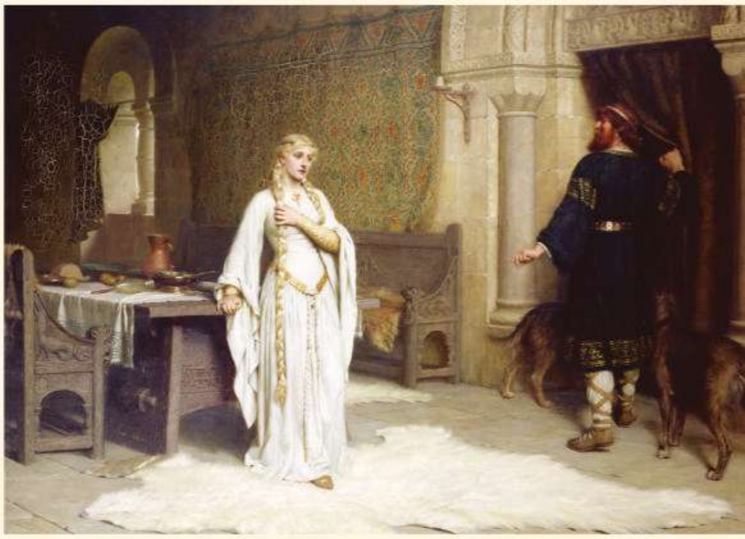
The real Lady Godiva

Historians have determined that Lady Godiva was, in fact, a real medieval noblewoman who lived in Coventry at the time her famous naked ride is said to have taken place. In many medieval sources, Godiva is alternatively known as Godgifu, a name meaning 'God's Gift' in Anglo Saxon. The first mention of Godiva, or Godgifu, in English records can be found in the *Domesday Book* of 1086, which records her as a prominent landowner – land associated with her is mentioned 52 times. However, these accounts are scarce in their detail and don't provide us with much descriptive information about her. More intriguing documentation about Godiva's life can be discovered in the chronicle of John of Worcester, the *Chronicon ex Chronicis*, written around the end of the 11th century, in which Godiva is identified as the wife of Leofric, Earl of Mercia – the same earl mentioned in the legend.

Leofric was, in many ways, a much more significant figure than his wife in Anglo-Saxon England. As the Earl of Mercia, he was one of the four most powerful men in the land. At the head of this group was England's king, four of whom were on the throne during Leofric's tenure as Earl of Mercia: Cnut (died 1035), Harold Harefoot (died 1040), Harthacnut (died 1042) and Edward the Confessor (died 1066). Underneath these various kings were England's three most powerful earls: the Earl of Northumberland, the Earl of Wessex and, last but not least, the Earl of Mercia. As Earl of Mercia, Leofric was influential in Anglo-Saxon politics and played key roles in ensuring the stability of England's throne and protecting the king from internal and external threats.

In the *Chronicon ex Chronicis*, John of Worcester says of Leofric: "During his whole life, this earl's sagacity was of the utmost advantage to the kings and the whole commonwealth of England." While his political importance is mentioned, it's another aspect of his life that makes up most of John of Worcester's description. Great pains were taken by the monk to stress the significance of Leofric's religious donations throughout his life. But it's not just Leofric's generosity that was lauded, it was his wife's too.

From John of Worcester's chronicle, a picture of Godiva can be formed as a kind and philanthropic woman. Between her



RIGHT Lady Godiva and Leofric were said to be a generous couple, donating land and money to several religious establishments

OPPOSITE Godiva's nude ride through Coventry became part of English folklore

and Leofric, a number of significant endowments are mentioned as having been made to various ecclesiastical sites around the kingdom of Mercia. In fact, John of Worcester reports that Godiva was "a worshipper of God, and devoted friend of St Mary, Ever-a-Virgin", highlighting that her piety formed a great part of her identity and how she was seen by others during her lifetime and immediately after. Of the noteworthy donations made, Godiva and Leofric gave gold, silver and jewels to monasteries at Wenlock and Leominster and land to a monastery in Worcester, as well as making contributions to other monasteries in Mercia. The couple also founded the monastery at Coventry, "amply endowing it with lands on their own patrimony, had so enriched with all kinds of ornament, that no monastery could be found in England possessed of such abundance of gold, silver, jewels and precious stones as it contained at that time", according to John of Worcester's account.

While Godiva's religious patronage is undoubtedly impressive, what is arguably more so is the fact that by the time she was recorded in the *Domesday Book* she was a major landholder in her own right. As with most medieval women, details of her life are vague, but the land she held provides some insight into her life and background. Leofric died in 1057, leaving Godiva widowed, and she would almost certainly have inherited her husband's land. But historians have also posited that much of her property was inherited from her own family and that she had brought significant holdings to her marriage. So it's likely that Godiva came from a wealthy and prominent family.

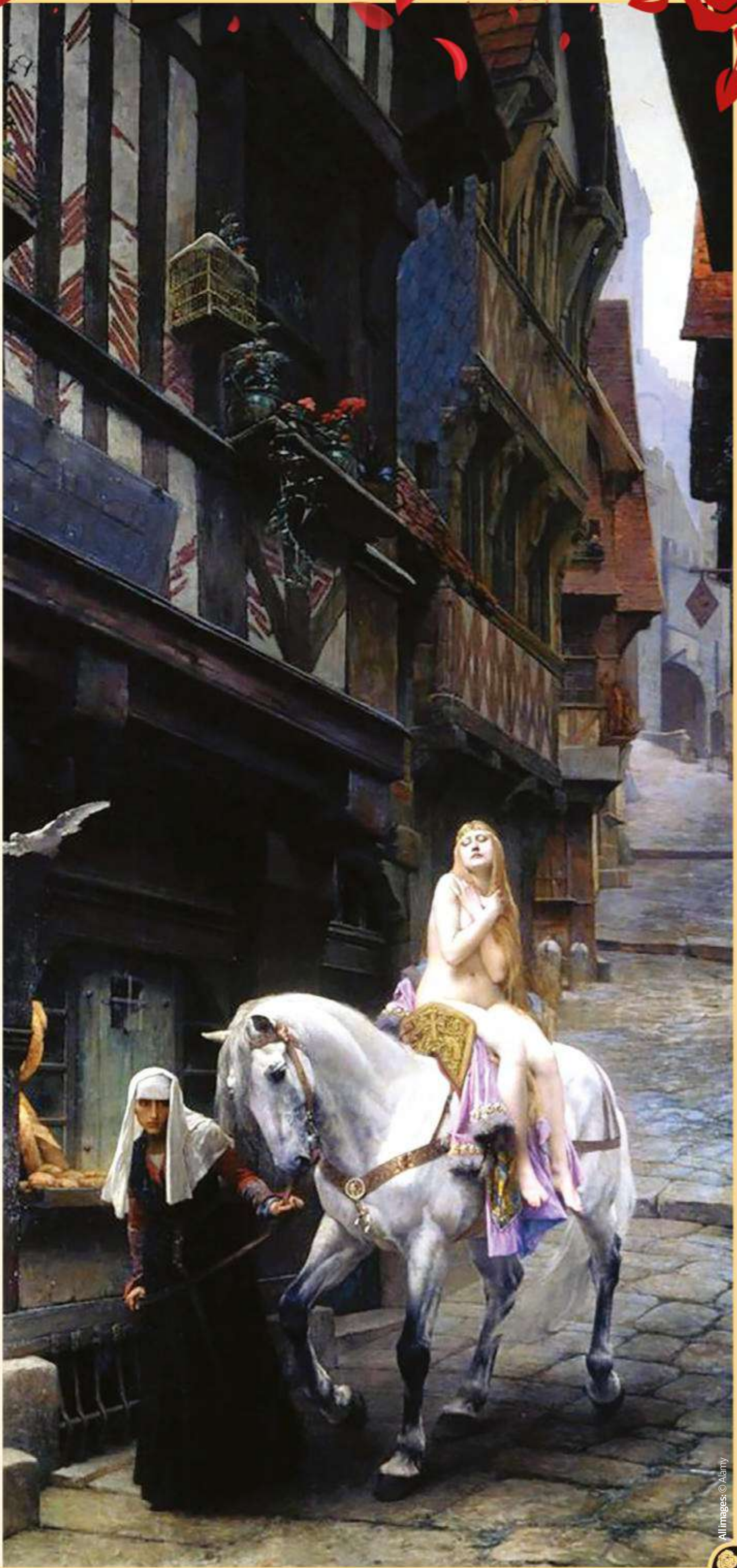
"IT REMAINS A MYSTERY AS TO WHERE ROGER OF WENDOVER FIRST CONCEIVED THIS TALE"

Despite the evidence that Godiva was a landowner in her own right, it's impossible to say how much political power and influence she would've been able to exercise. However, in the *Domesday Book* (recorded 20 years after the Norman Conquest of 1066) she is listed as one of only three English landowners – an impressive feat for a woman of that era – although she'd almost certainly died before the completion of this census.

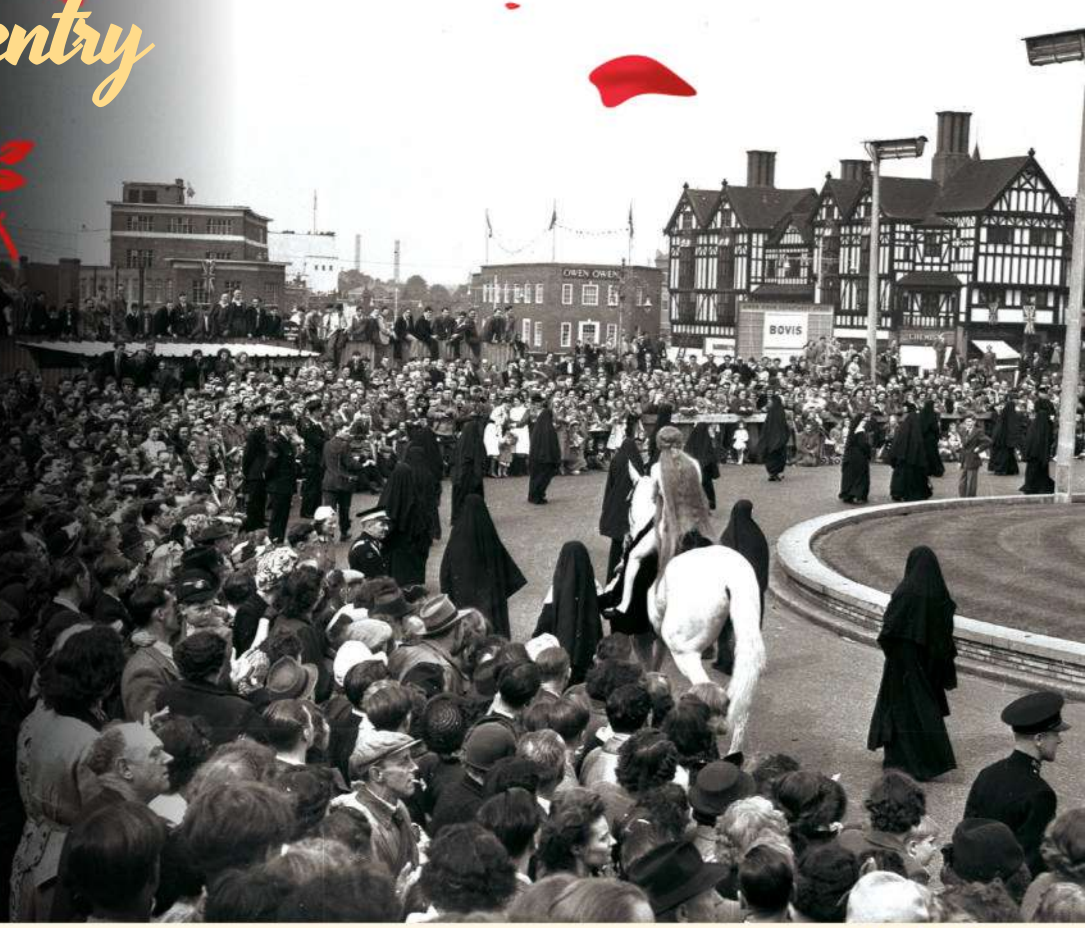
If the real Lady Godiva was an admirable and wealthy woman of her time, it's puzzling that she's only remembered for her naked ride. Yet none of the early sources, where information regarding her identity has been discovered, mention such an event. As a result, many historians think it's highly unlikely that it ever happened.

Development of the myth

If none of the earlier sources mention Lady Godiva's ride, where did the story come from? The first description of the event has been found by historians in another medieval chronicle – the *Flores Historiarum,* written by Roger of Wendover, a monk at St Albans Abbey, in the early 13th century. Roger of Wendover's account tells of Godiva's determination to rid the people of Coventry of the unfair tax, Leofric's proposition and the ride itself. While all these elements are recognisable from the story as we recall it today, it remains a mystery as to where Roger of Wendover first conceived this tale. He may have invented it himself or he may have heard it from somewhere else. Some historians have even suggested the legend could have been passed down through generations via oral storytelling, and as such its true origins remain unclear.



All images: © Alamy



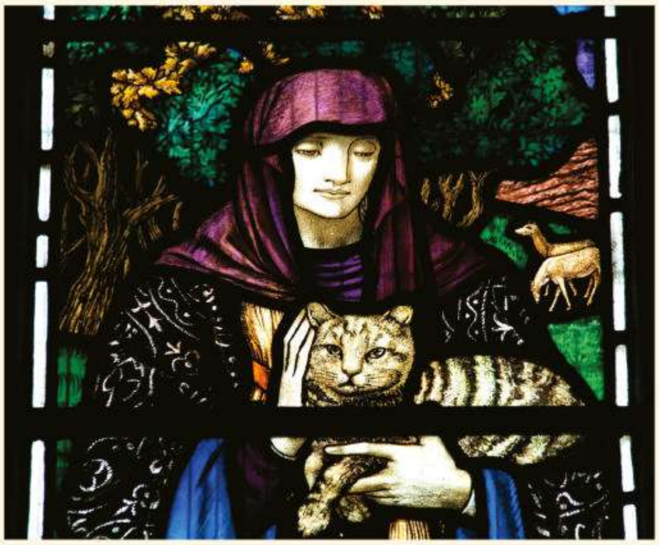
Godiva in Coventry

How the medieval heroine is remembered in her home city

For Coventry, Lady Godiva still looms large. In the city's long history, it is the image of a naked woman on horseback that has arguably come to be most associated with the area's heritage. To pay homage to its most famous resident, annual Lady Godiva processions that re-enacted the legend through the streets of Coventry were held from 1678 onwards. Nowadays, Godiva's name is prolific in the city, with an annual music festival – the Godiva Festival – held in one of the city's parks.

Positioned in the centre of Coventry is a more permanent commemoration of Lady Godiva and her famous ride. Unveiled in 1949, the Self Sacrifice statue (also known as the Lady Godiva statue) is a bronze sculpture depicting the nude heroine on horseback, as if she were processing through the city. It's mounted on a plinth inscribed with the words of Tennyson's *Godiva* poem, and stands as a steadfast reminder of Coventry's best-known legend.

It's difficult to determine the veracity of the Godiva story given historical accounts of both Godiva and Leofric are at odds with their behaviour as described by Roger of Wendover: Leofric was known to be financially generous and Godiva is believed to have had some power and influence as a landholder. Unfortunately, it's unlikely that we will ever know whether the story is in any way true, although, given the lack of evidence, most historians conclude it's almost certainly fictional. Regardless of its accuracy, the legend began with Roger of Wendover's chronicle, written over a century after Godiva's death.



LEFT This stained-glass window in a church in Woolhope, Herefordshire, is believed to depict Lady Godiva

OPPOSITE-TOP So intertwined is Godiva's identity with the legend, very few artistic depictions of her show her clothed

OPPOSITE-BOTTOM The Self Sacrifice Statue, better known as the Lady Godiva statue, stands in the centre of Coventry

"IN AN AGE OF CHIVALRIC VALUES, GODIVA WAS THE PERFECT EXAMPLE OF A RARE FEMALE CHAMPION"

In his original version, one aspect of the story, as it tends to be recounted in the modern day, is not present: Godiva never asks the people of Coventry to avoid looking at her. Instead, her long thick hair acts as a veil that covers her entirely except for her legs. The addition of her proclamation and the townspeople hiding away during the ride was not introduced to the tale until Richard Grafton's *Chronicle of England* was published in 1569. Many other later printed versions of Lady Godiva's legend include similar added details, contributing to the development of the myth as each author and chronicler took their turn in adapting the tale. It's possible that Grafton's addition of the proclamation intended to reclaim some of Lady Godiva's dignity in an age of increasing religious modesty.

Following the first recounting of the Godiva story, the legend took off and became an increasingly popular tale during the Middle Ages. Godiva's femininity, strength and bravery appealed to the noblewomen of Europe, who recognised her as a romantic heroine, willing to sacrifice her dignity for the good of others. In an age of chivalric values, Godiva was the perfect example of a rare female champion among a sea of brave knights and dashing gentlemen.

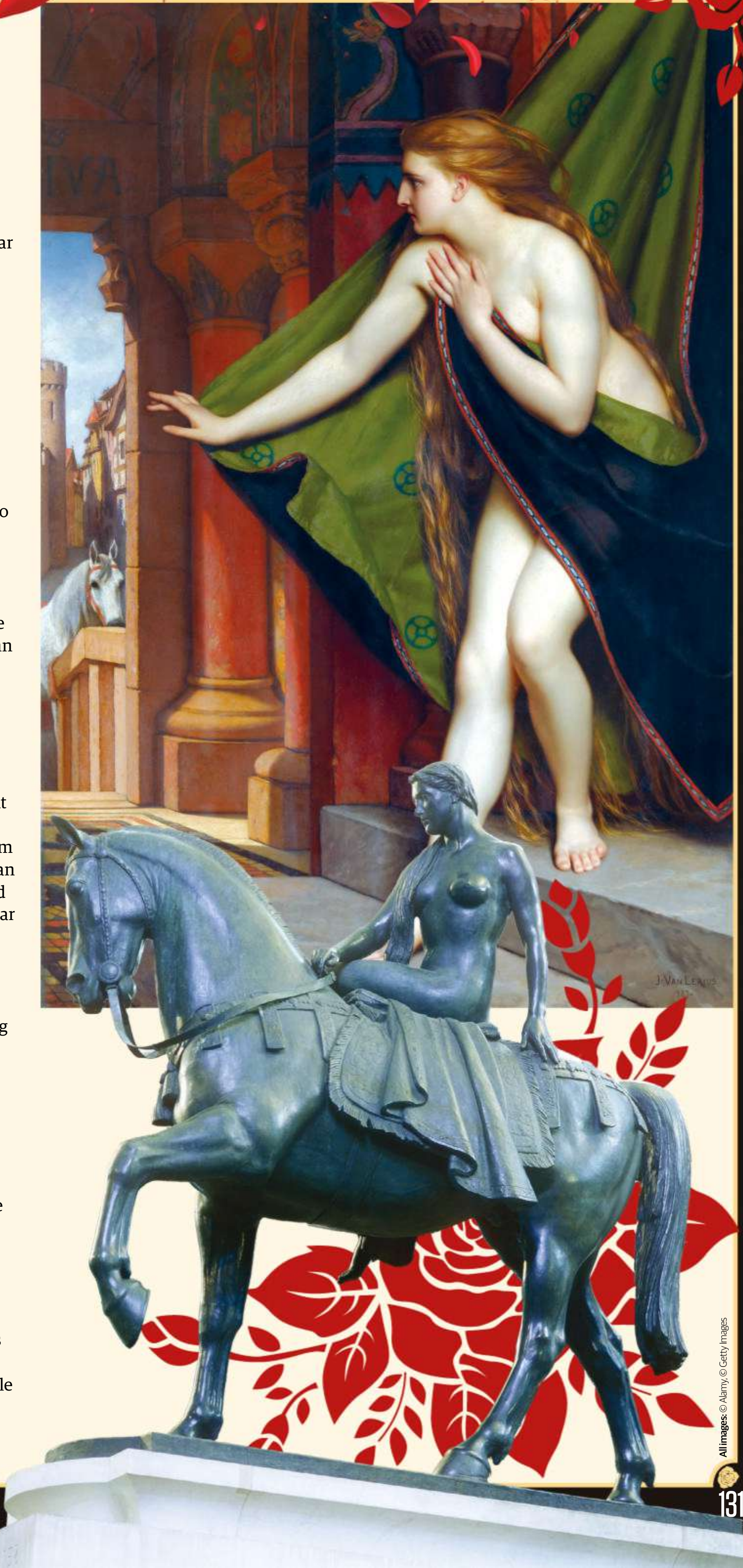
Though the popularity of the tale waned for a couple of centuries following the medieval period, the story never truly disappeared. Experiencing a revival during the late 18th and 19th centuries, the legend was beloved by Romantic and pre-Raphaelite poets, writers and painters looking to the past for inspiration. Lady Godiva and her ride became the focus of many beautiful works of art and literature that showed her in all her imagined beauty, often with a noble white steed, and as a result, her identity became even more entwined with the story. An increasing number of people were exposed to the legend through these works, in particular through Alfred Tennyson's 1840 poem *Godiva*, which retells the story of the ride. The poem ends with Tennyson purporting that by completing the ride Godiva "took the tax away and built herself an everlasting name." Ironically, it was Tennyson's poem that contributed to the ingraining of Godiva's memory in English culture.

Inspired by Tennyson's poem, an abundance of artwork depicting Godiva's ride flourished, contributing to the increasing traction of the legend. Scenes from the poem became common fodder for artists and the myth came to life in a way it had never done before. Godiva became the ultimate romantic heroine with a legacy that even managed to persist throughout the Victorian era, when attitudes towards decency, sexuality and nudity were prudish to say the least. Victorian artists continued to portray Godiva in all her glory, though many did so by posing her in ways that covered her modesty. In fact, the most famous image of Lady Godiva – the title image of this article – was painted by Victorian artist John Collier in 1897.

Legacy of Lady Godiva

Through renewed interest in the Lady Godiva legend and the prevalence of her striking image in art and literature throughout the centuries, the memory of this medieval woman has persisted despite the odds. Even up to the present day, Lady Godiva continues to appear in popular culture as a recognisable figure. A black-and-white silent short picture from 1911 first brought the Godiva legend to film, while an American movie from 1955, *Lady Godiva of Coventry*, starring Hollywood actress Maureen O'Hara in the titular role, saw the story appear on the big screen. References to Godiva have also permeated music over the last century, with her name being used in the titles of songs by Peter and Gordon (in 1966) and the Velvet Underground (in 1968). Most famously of all, she's mentioned in the lyrics of Queen's *Don't Stop Me Now* (1978): "I'm a racing car, passing by like Lady Godiva."

In many ways, it's unfortunate that the memory of Lady Godiva has come to be associated with an imagined event rather than the philanthropic and religious activities that occupied her life. But, in other ways, the remarkable tale of her ride has commemorated her when the legacies of many other extraordinary medieval women have been lost. In truth, we do not know who Lady Godiva really was. What she looked like, her personality and many other details of her life have disappeared. But for this fictional story to have become so intertwined with her identity, it's safe to say that she must have been an extraordinary person. The records of her generosity most likely influenced the magnanimous fictional version of her that we remember today, fighting for the rights of the people who considered her their superior. It's possible that the heroic aspect of Godiva's story, resonating with people down the ages, saw the myth grow and spread from one small mention in a medieval chronicle to become one of the foundational tales of English folklore.

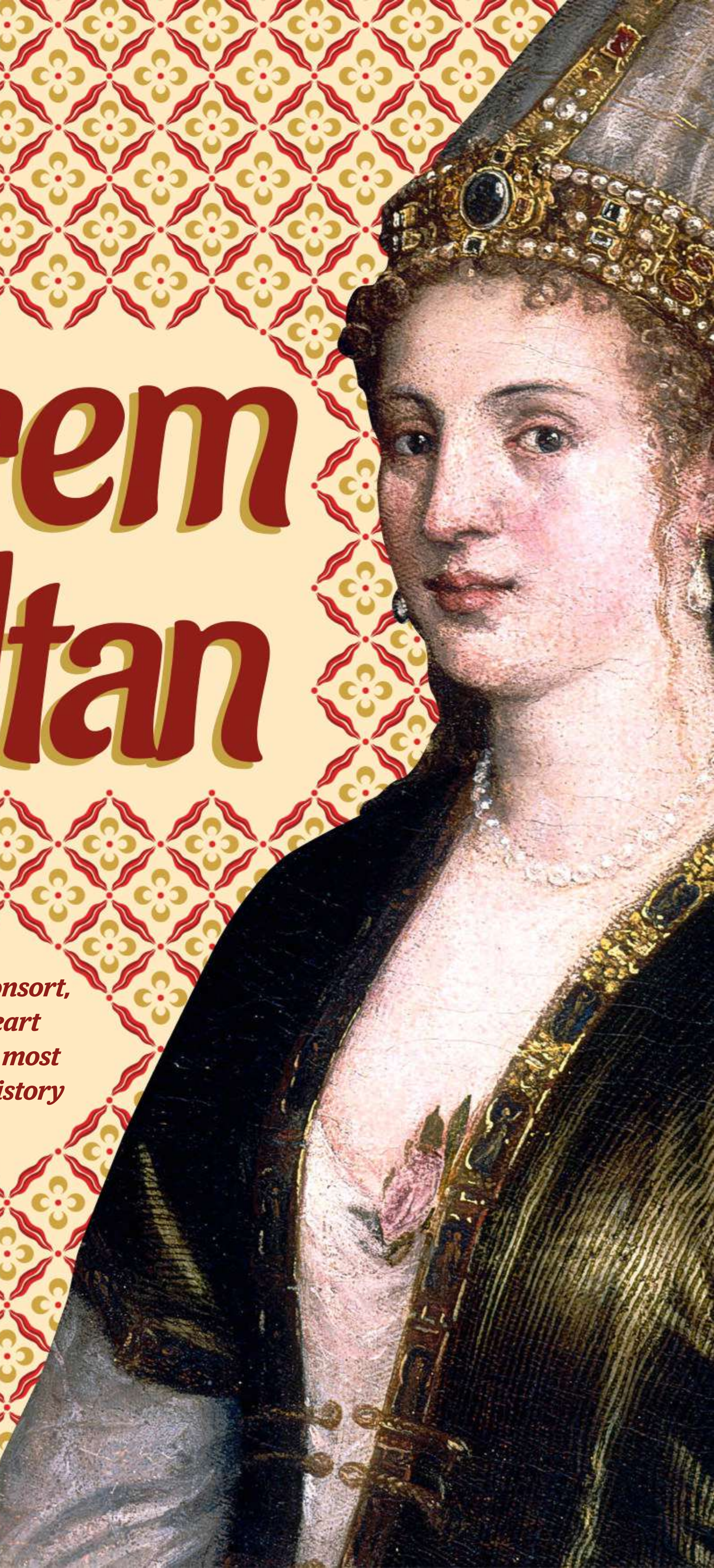


All images: © Alamy, © Getty Images

Hürrem Sultan

From slave girl to imperial consort, how one girl captured the heart of an emperor to become the most powerful woman in Ottoman history

Written by Emily Staniforth



When people think of the Ottoman Empire, they often picture grand sultans and their viziers ruling over large swathes of land from their luxurious bases in what is now Istanbul. Of all these sultans, one springs to mind more than any other: Suleiman the Magnificent. As his famous moniker suggests, Suleiman's reign (1520-1566) encompassed a golden age for the Ottomans. But what many people do not know is that throughout much of his reign, an intelligent, powerful and unexpected woman stood by his side. Hürrem Sultan became the most prominent woman in the Ottoman Empire when she caught Suleiman's eye, having risen from humble beginnings. This is her story.

The Ruthenian Maid

The tale of Hürrem Sultan begins in the early 16th century in Ruthenia, a region located within the Kingdom of Poland but which now sits in modern-day Ukraine. It was there that a young girl lived. Historians have not been able to piece much together about the early life of this Ruthenian girl, though some have suggested that she may have been the daughter of an Orthodox priest and was born sometime between 1502 and 1506. As to what her name was, some have identified her original Christian name as Aleksandra Lisowska, though again this cannot be proven. Despite her original identity having been lost over the centuries, this girl was destined for a magnificent life as one of the most powerful figures in the most powerful empire in the world.

In her early teenage life, the girl who would become Hürrem Sultan was snatched from her hometown by the Crimean Tatars in a slave raid. She was transported to the slave market in Caffa in the Crimean peninsula and from there was taken to Constantinople, the capital of the Ottoman Empire, which is now Istanbul in modern-day Turkey. She arrived at a slave market called Avret Pazari or the Woman's Bazaar. The journey from Ruthenia to Constantinople would have taken around 10 days in all, and though a slave, it is likely that as a young woman, the teenager would have been treated relatively well – attractive young female slaves fetched a higher price and so needed to be kept in a good condition. It was at this particular market that the Ruthenian girl was allegedly purchased by a wealthy man for his friend. The friend happened to be Prince Suleiman, the heir of Sultan Selim I. As a result of this comparatively fortunate deal, an anonymous girl from Eastern Europe found herself at the very heart of the Ottoman Empire.

> "Hürrem became the first woman in the empire's history to have enjoyed such a privileged and elevated position"

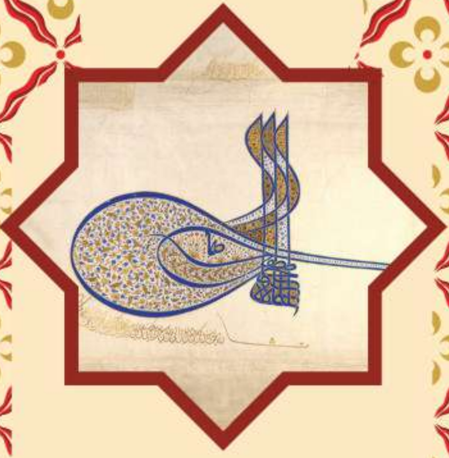
In the Sultan's Harem

After being bought from the slave market, the young girl was placed in the imperial harem as a concubine. The harem at the Ottoman court did not just house the women who lived as concubines, but also other female domestic servants, and the female members of the Sultan's family. Fortunately for historians, it becomes much easier to identify the girl from this point onwards, as she was given two nicknames. The first was Roxelana or Roxolana – a name which presumably came from her Ruthenian origins. The second moniker bestowed upon her was the Turkish name Hürrem, meaning joyful or the laughing one, which allegedly came about due to the sunny disposition she displayed while a member of the harem. Both of these names have been used interchangeably, though she was more likely known as Hürrem to the Ottomans and Roxelana to the rest of Europe.

It was supposedly Hürrem's bright and engaging personality that first attracted special attention from Suleiman I, who in 1520 had been made Sultan after the death of his father. Though many of the sources regarding Hürrem's appearance and nature do not refer to her as being particularly beautiful or attractive, they do paint a picture of a striking young woman. Her red hair and fair skin made her distinctive in the harem and undoubtedly helped her to stand out among the 300 or more concubines. She was also extremely intelligent – a quality that would serve her well later in her life and would likely have been attractive to a relatively new Sultan in his first years of rulership. Suleiman was known to value the support and advice of his mother, Hafsa Sultan, his sisters and his closest friends and advisors, and it is known that Hürrem quickly became part of that support system. She acted as his confidant, and her letters to Suleiman show that she did her best to keep him informed of what was happening at home while he was away attending to matters elsewhere in the empire. Perhaps it was this meeting of minds that bonded Suleiman and Hürrem, or perhaps they simply fell in love. Whatever the reason for the attraction of Suleiman to Hürrem, she was to become an exceptional figure in his life.

As a concubine, it was Hürrem's job to join the Sultan in his bedroom whenever ►

All images: © Getty Images

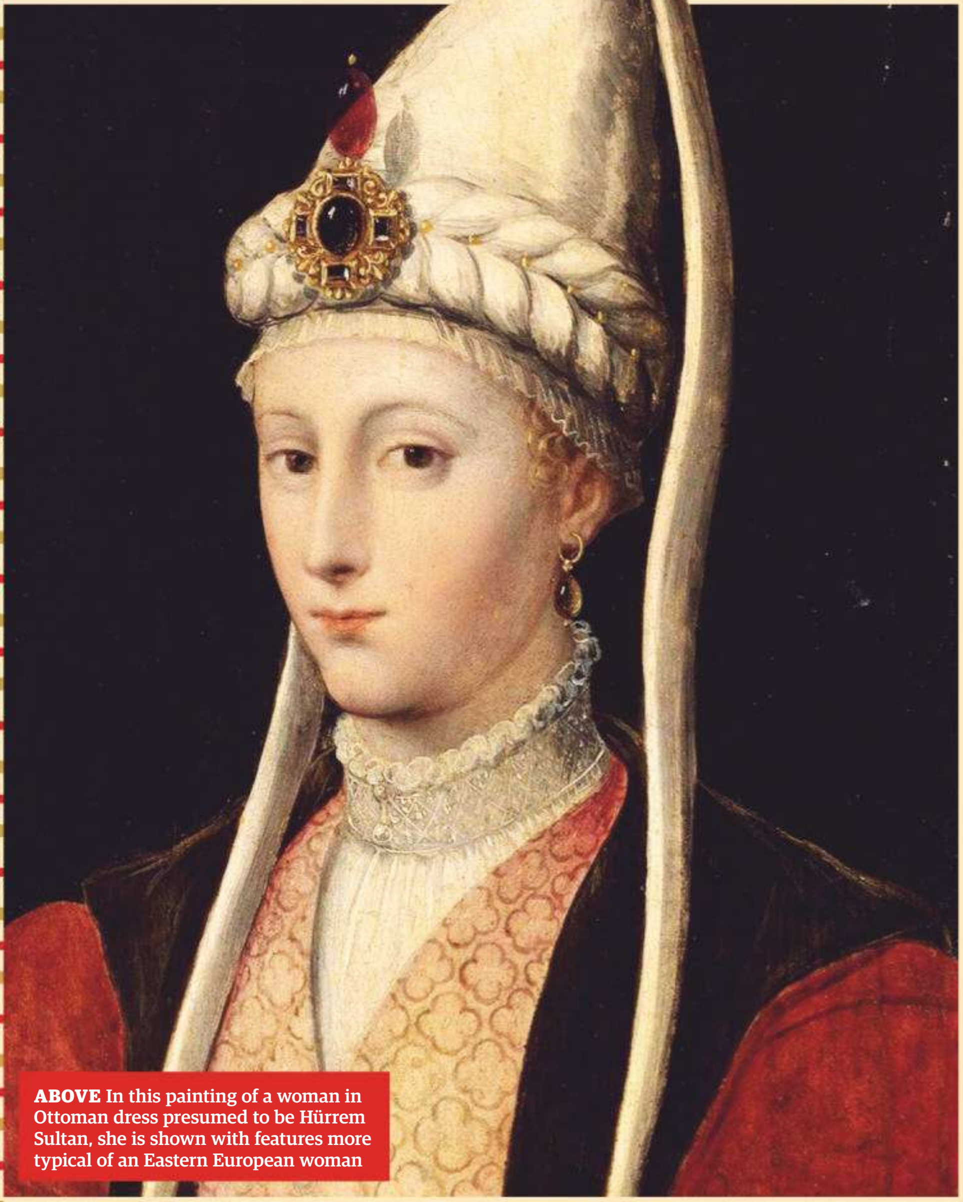


Writing Love Letters

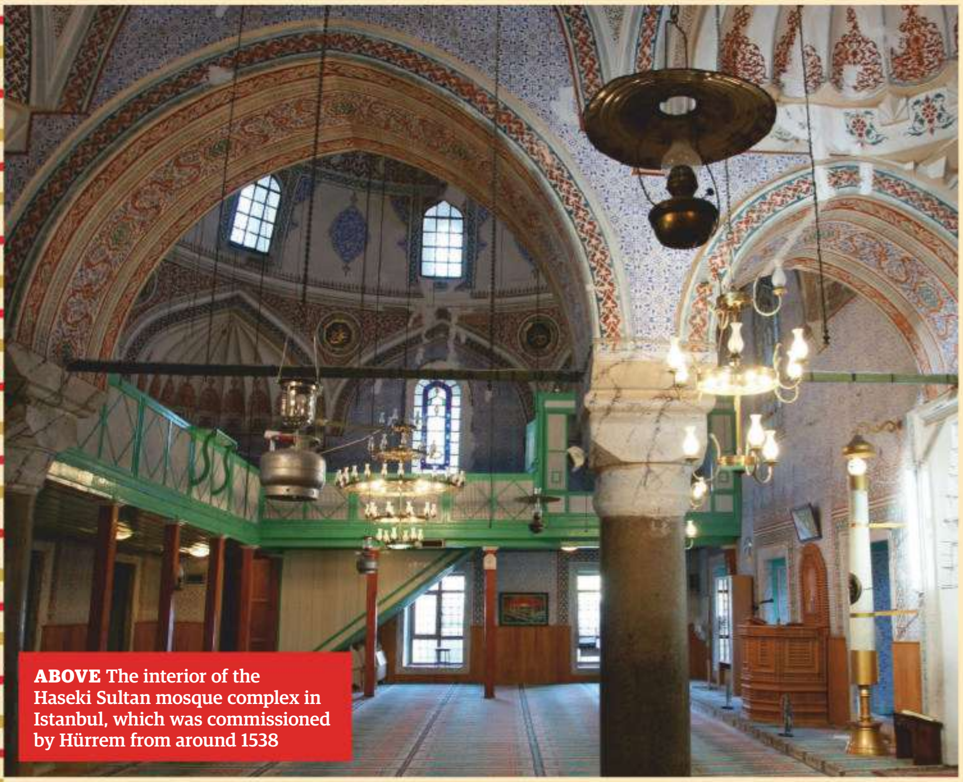
Suleiman and Hürrem were not shy when it came to discussing their feelings

While sources are abundant for historians exploring the relationship between Hürrem and Suleiman, arguably nothing is more useful than the love letters and poetry the pair wrote to each other right from the start of their relationship. While some of the letters spoke of practical and political matters, they also included beautiful statements of love for each other. In this particular passage from an undated letter, Suleiman takes the time to express his feelings for his wife, calling her, among other things, his Sultan. It's quite a statement from the "magnificent" emperor himself.

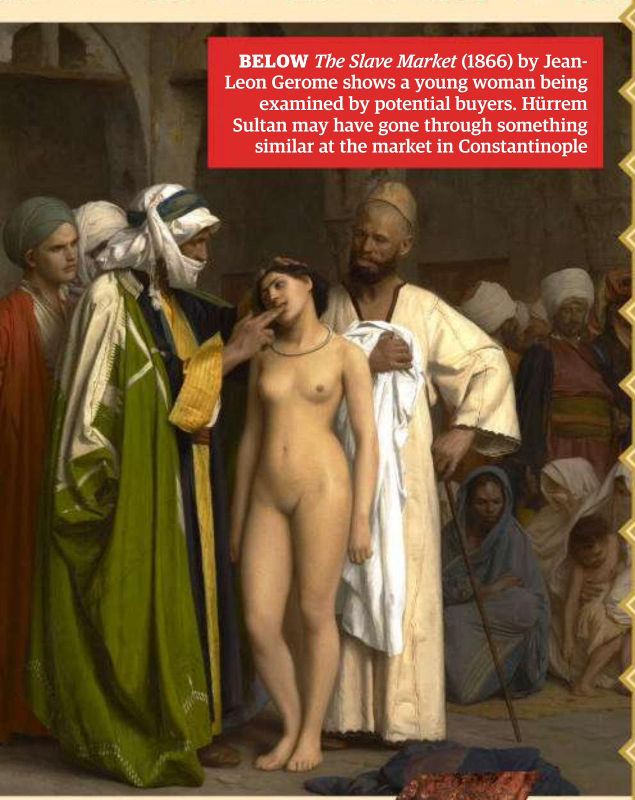
"Throne of my lonely niche, my wealth, my love, my moonlight.
My most sincere friend, my confidant, my very existence, my Sultan
The most beautiful among the beautiful…
My springtime, my merry faced love, my daytime, my sweetheart, laughing leaf…
My plants, my sweet, my rose, the one only who does not distress me in this world…
My Istanbul, my Caraman, the earth of my Anatolia
My Badakhshan, my Baghdad and Khorasan
My woman of the beautiful hair, my love of the slanted brow, my love of eyes full of mischief…
I'll sing your praises always…"



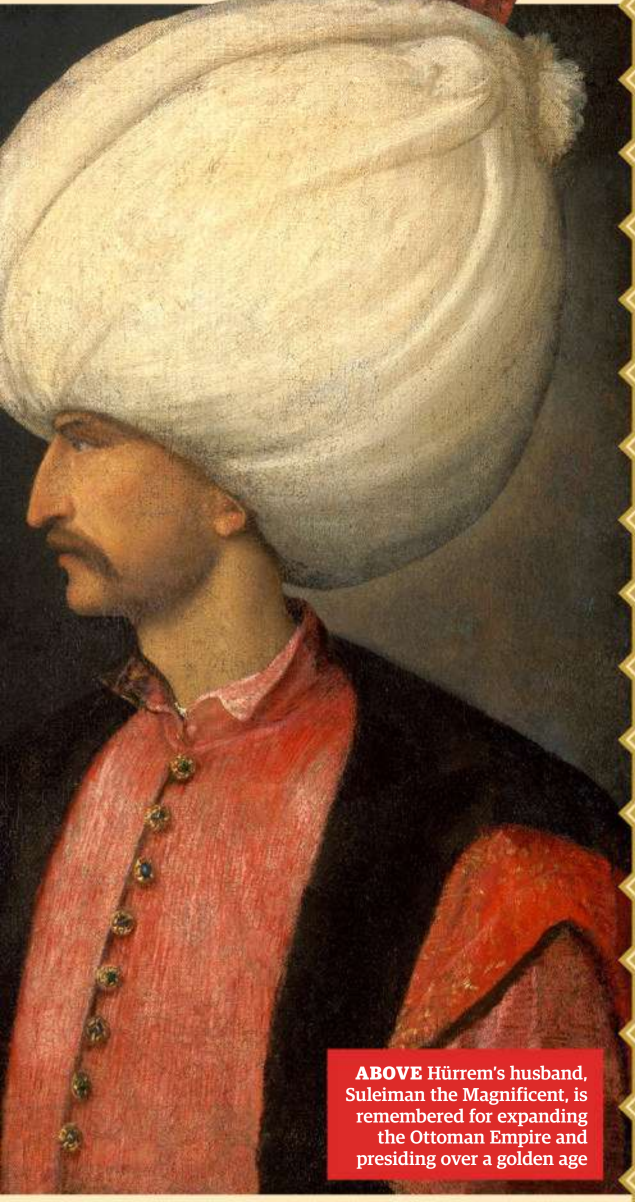
ABOVE In this painting of a woman in Ottoman dress presumed to be Hürrem Sultan, she is shown with features more typical of an Eastern European woman



ABOVE The interior of the Haseki Sultan mosque complex in Istanbul, which was commissioned by Hürrem from around 1538



BELOW *The Slave Market* (1866) by Jean-Leon Gerome shows a young woman being examined by potential buyers. Hürrem Sultan may have gone through something similar at the market in Constantinople



ABOVE Hürrem's husband, Suleiman the Magnificent, is remembered for expanding the Ottoman Empire and presiding over a golden age

he requested her presence. However, though all concubines were in a similar position with similar roles, there was a hierarchy to abide by. In order to prevent power struggles within the harem, it was traditional that each concubine would only give birth to one son by the Sultan and by the time Hürrem had caught Suleiman's eye, he already had a son with his favourite concubine. Mahidevran Hatun had given birth to Mustafa in around 1516, before Suleiman had replaced his father as Sultan, and she had held a place as Suleiman's favourite, or Haseki, ever since. However, Hürrem quickly supplanted Mahidevran as the Haseki, and by 1521 she had given birth to a son, Mehmed.

Having had a son by the Sultan, Hürrem should never have had another child. By restricting concubines to a policy of one mother to one son, it ensured that no woman would ever have any considerable sway or influence over the Sultan or the line of succession. However, it is clear that Suleiman already saw Hürrem as much more than just another of his concubines as in 1522, just a year after the birth of her son, Hürrem gave birth to a daughter named Mihrimah. Hürrem and the Sultan continued to defy the traditional expectations of an Ottoman emperor's relationship with his concubine and had four more children together, who were all sons – named Selim, Abdullah, Bayezid and Cihangir.

As the mother of the Sultan's six children, Hürrem became the first woman in the empire's history to have enjoyed such a privileged and elevated position, and it must have been apparent to everyone that Suleiman's feelings towards Hürrem were strong enough to overcome centuries of ritual and convention. If his feelings were not already evident, they would become so in 1533 when Suleiman made a decision that would transform Hürrem's life.

> "The Janissaries and the entire court hate her and her children likewise"

Empress of the Ottomans

In 1533 or 1534, Hürrem's position as a concubine was nullified and Suleiman married her, making her his legal wife. This move shocked the Ottomans and the Western world alike, as it was not customary for the Ottoman Sultans to marry at all. An ambassador present in Constantinople at the time of the wedding described the affair as an "extraordinary event, one absolutely unprecedented in the history of Sultans." Hürrem had arrived in the city as a foreign slave and in just a few short years had become the most powerful Ottoman woman in centuries.

As the wife of the emperor, Hürrem's status was elevated accordingly and she was granted luxuries she likely would never have dreamed of. She was looked after by her own servants and was given a substantial allowance to spend on clothes and comforts. She also made the decision to move the Sultan's harem from its residence at Eski Saray (the Old Palace) to the Topkapi Palace where her husband lived. This proved to be a monumental event, as it placed Hürrem and other women of the harem at the very centre of Ottoman power where they had never been before. This allowed Hürrem more frequent and closer access to the Sultan, but also ensured that her female successors maintained a presence at the Topkapi Palace even after her lifetime, transforming the role of Ottoman women forever.

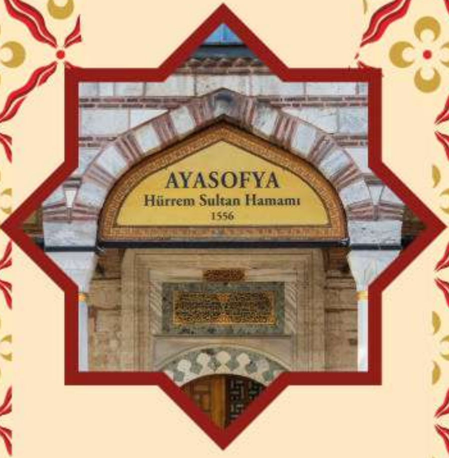
Hürrem also allegedly arranged for all the most beautiful of her husband's concubines to be married off, meaning they left the harem completely. As the first woman to marry the Sultan, it was unsurprising that Hürrem felt as though she had to protect her relationship with Suleiman, though many of her contemporaries believed her to be holding onto power as tightly as she could. It seems as though Hürrem's fears of threat and competition from other women were unfounded however, as once they were legally married the Sultan stayed faithful to his wife, and their relationship, in another unconventional move for an Ottoman leader, became a monogamous one.

As Suleiman's wife, Hürrem acted as a consort and used her intelligence and political astuteness to her advantage. She discussed state affairs with her husband and influenced him and his viziers (politicians). Due to her background and Eastern European roots, Hürrem utilised her skills to foster a political relationship with the King of Poland, Sigismund II Augustus, with whom she corresponded about state affairs. However, it was in her patronage of the arts and architecture, and through her philanthropic and public endeavours, that Hürrem came into her own.

Contemporary Criticism

As a woman in the 16th century, it is not surprising that Hürrem had her detractors, both within the empire and from external observers. The Ottomans in particular were not Hürrem's biggest fans, as many of them found the situation between herself and the Sultan confusing to say the least. Many of the traditions that had been broken by ►

All images: © Getty Images, © Alamy

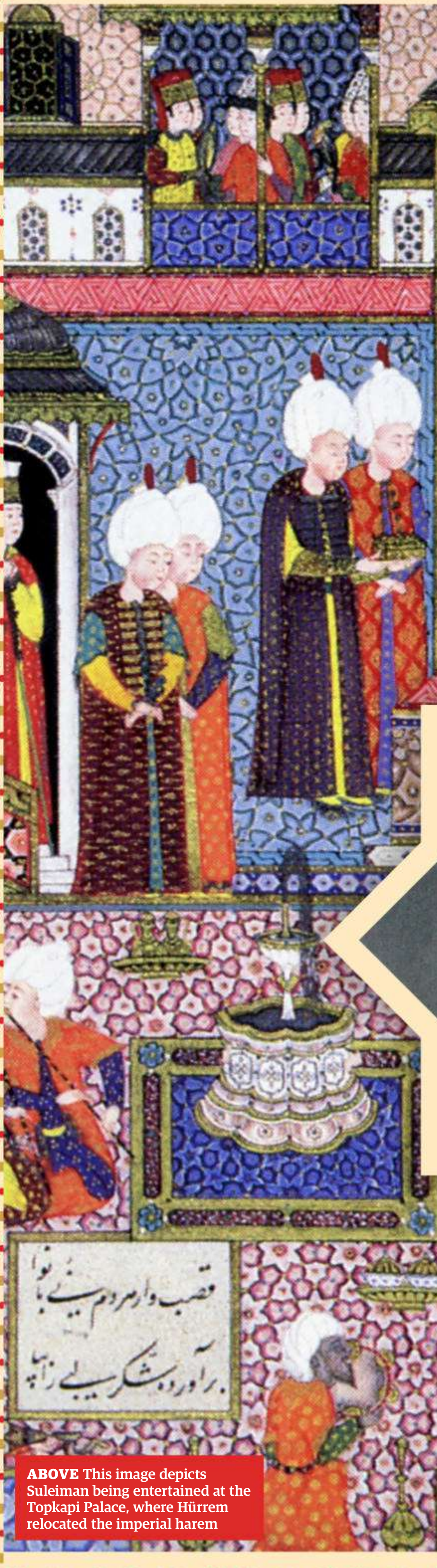


Philanthropic Pursuits

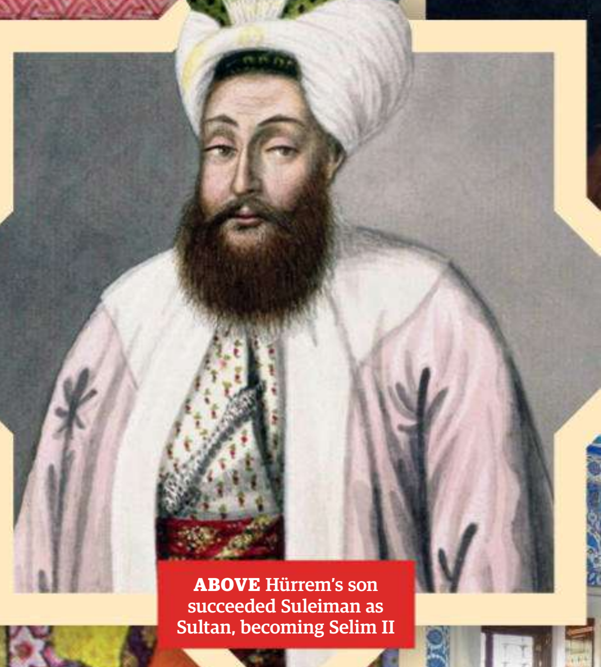
How Hürrem Sultan built her legacy

Engaging in charitable endeavours proved to be an important part of Hürrem's life as the Sultan's wife, and in 1538 she began her first project with the chief architect of the Ottomans, Mimar Sinan. They had a new mosque built in a neglected part of Constantinople and over a number of years, more structures were added that were intended to benefit the community in that area. Two schools, a soup kitchen, a fountain that provided fresh water and a hospital became part of the Haseki Sultan complex.

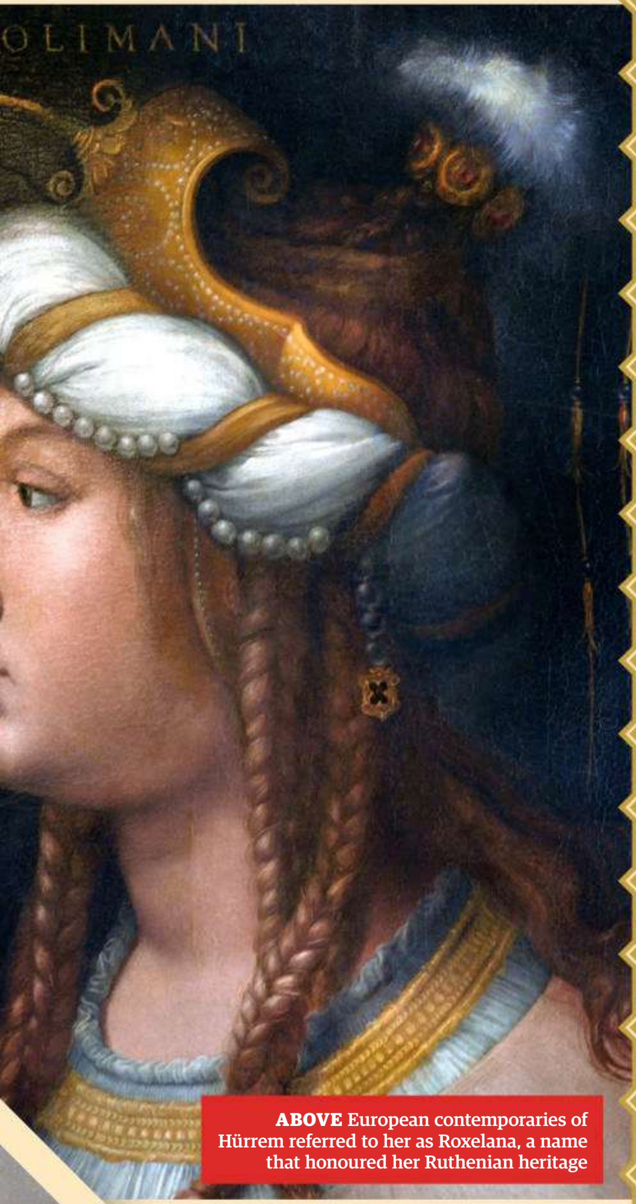
In addition to this complex, Hürrem also built a number of mosques in other regions, as well as soup kitchens in Mecca and Jerusalem, the latter of which reportedly fed around 500 people twice a day. Hürrem also commissioned the building of a bathhouse in the Hagia Sophia area of Constantinople, which still stands today. As well as participating in building projects, Hürrem also established foundations across the empire. Leslie Peirce states in her biography of Hürrem: "By the time of her death, major charitable institutions existed in her name in the holy cities of Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem and in the Ottoman capitals of Istanbul and Adrianople, while smaller endowments were scattered across the empire in regional capitals and towns."



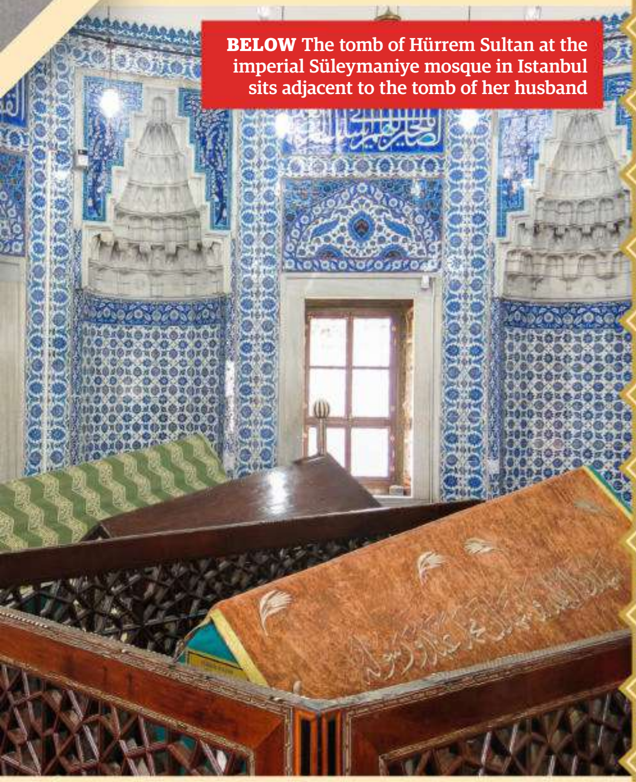
ABOVE This image depicts Suleiman being entertained at the Topkapi Palace, where Hürrem relocated the imperial harem



ABOVE Hürrem's son succeeded Suleiman as Sultan, becoming Selim II



ABOVE European contemporaries of Hürrem referred to her as Roxelana, a name that honoured her Ruthenian heritage



BELOW The tomb of Hürrem Sultan at the imperial Süleymaniye mosque in Istanbul sits adjacent to the tomb of her husband

Suleiman and Hürrem were designed to curtail the influence of a single woman over the Sultan – she was not only a woman in a powerful position, but she was also the first woman to have ever achieved such influence. Many courtiers reportedly disliked Hürrem due to her sway with the Sultan, with one Italian visitor to Constantinople writing of the situation: "the Janissaries and the entire court hate her and her children likewise, but because the Grand Turk loves her very much, no one dares to speak, and always every one speaks ill of her and of her children, and well of the first-born and of his mother, who has been repudiated."

Comparisons to Mahidevran, the "perfect" mother of the first son who had abided by all the traditional conventions of a favoured concubine seem unfair, given that Suleiman had a huge part to play in Hürrem's elevation from slave to wife. But living as a prominent woman in a traditionally patriarchal system was never going to be easy for Hürrem. She had been allowed to stay in Constantinople while her sons moved away to take up political positions in other areas of the empire, again not a usual custom for a mother of the Sultan's son, which added to the negative judgements about her proximity to the Sultan's power. Not being able to comprehend Hürrem's hold over Suleiman, people drew their own conclusions about her appeal. Some contemporary sources talk of speculations that Hürrem had somehow bewitched the Sultan.

Two of the worst accusations levelled against Hürrem however involved the grisly deaths of two of the most prominent men in Suleiman's court. In 1536, the Grand Vizier (the most important politician aside from the Sultan) Ibrahim Pasha was discovered dead in a guest room of the Sultan's palace. He had eaten with Suleiman the night before, as his closest political advisor, and had retired to his chambers where he was brutally killed. The motive for his execution remains unclear, and over the centuries, historians and detractors of Hürrem's have speculated about her involvement in the event. Though there are no records of her being part of the decision-making process, we do know that the relationship between Pasha and Hürrem could be tense and competitive as the two favourites of Suleiman.

Another historical narrative has placed Hürrem as the party responsible for the death of the Sultan's oldest son, Mustafa, in 1553. Mustafa's existence had posed a substantial threat to the potential for one of Hürrem's sons to succeed their father, and it is believed that this may have played a part in Suleiman's decision to have his own son executed. Once again, however, the extent of Hürrem's influence over this decision has long been debated, and it is acknowledged that Mustafa's actions in the months leading up to his execution had threatened the authority of his ageing father.

> "Contemporary sources talk of speculations that Hürrem had somehow bewitched the Sultan"

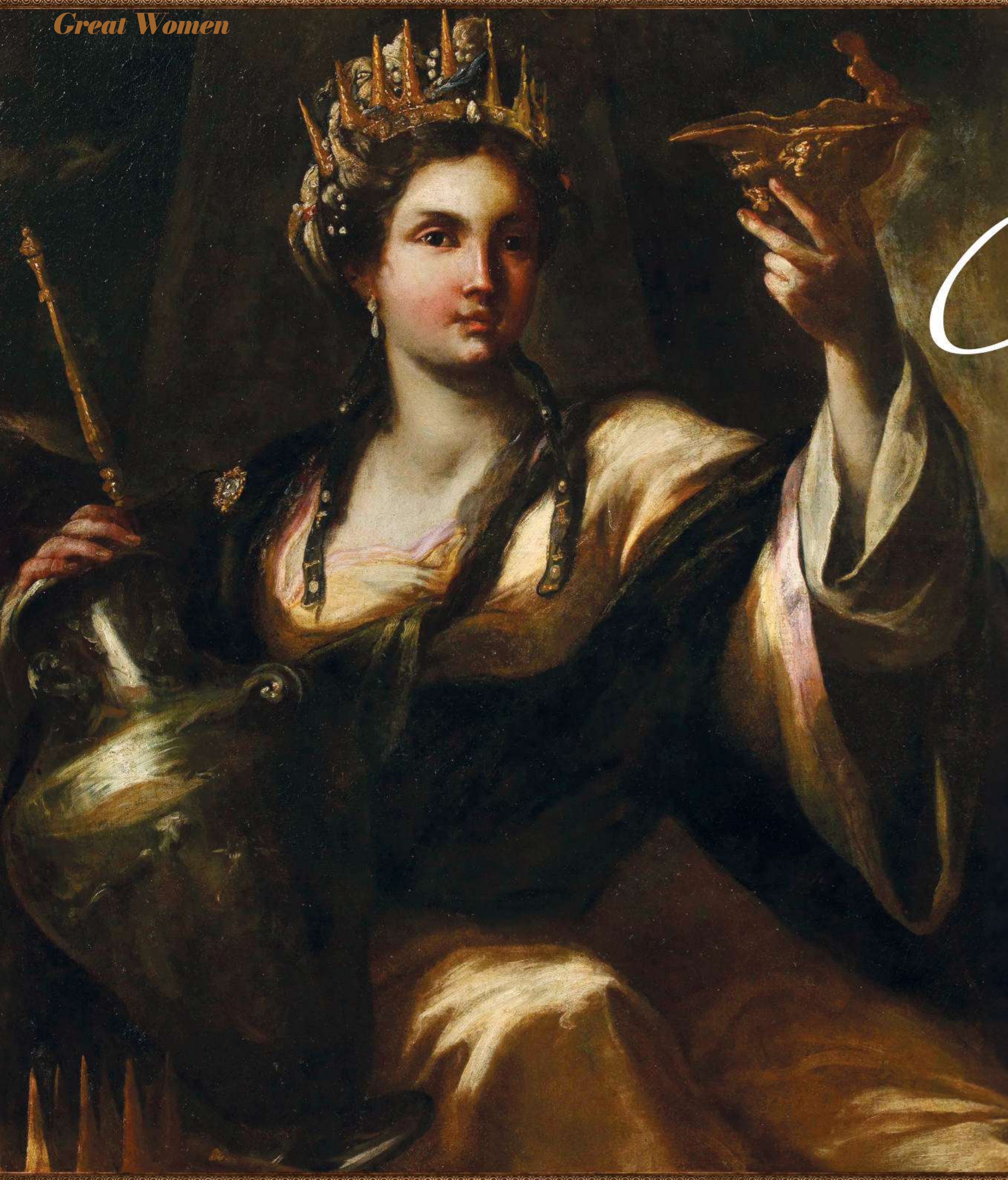
Legacy

Hürrem Sultan died in April 1558 after suffering from an unknown illness for quite some time. Historians have estimated that she was likely in her early 50s. Her death was significant in that she left her husband alone for the first time since he had become Sultan in 1520. He was reportedly devastated by the loss, and had Hürrem laid to rest in a mausoleum within the imperial Süleymaniye mosque. Upon his death eight years later, Suleiman was buried near to his beloved wife.

One of the greatest legacies left behind by Hürrem were her children. Though she had outlived some of her sons, several of her children continued to thrive. One of her sons, Selim, inherited the sultanate from his father upon his death and became Selim II, ruling the Ottoman Empire from 1566 to 1574. Hürrem's daughter, on the other hand, stepped into her mother's shoes somewhat after her death, becoming a support to her father in the last years of his life. Mihrimah was similar to her mother in many ways as she took on political positions, advised her father on state matters and patronised charitable projects. Without the influence of Hürrem, and the ways in which her presence by Suleiman's side had changed the roles women could play in the Ottoman world, Mihrimah would likely not have had the chance to demonstrate her own capabilities. In fact, Hürrem's relationship with Suleiman is crucial in defining a new age for the Ottomans – the Sultanate of Women. Hürrem was one of the first women to exercise power in the empire, but she was certainly not the last.

Passing judgement on Hürrem's time as consort is a polarising issue. To some she was a cruel, manipulative woman, while to others she was an astute politician who took advantage of the opportunities afforded to her. Hopefully what is apparent though, is that Hürrem was an extraordinary woman of her time. Her rise to power, from slave girl to the Sultan's consort, was incomparable and she certainly left her mark on the history of the Ottomans, of women in the 16th century, and on modern-day Turkey.

All images: © Getty Images, © Alamy



Artemisia

PIRATE PRINCESS OF HALICARNASSUS

Praised by Herodotus, what do we really know about the woman who stood with Xerxes against the Greeks?

Written by Jonathan Gordon

In 480 BCE Xerxes I took on the city states of Greece in two historic battles. In one, the Battle of Thermopylae, his (possibly) 300,000-strong army was triumphant, but at great cost and against what legend tells us was only 300 Spartans, led by King Leonidas (estimates vary, but 7,000 men seems more likely). Meanwhile, in the straits between the island of Salamis and the port of Piraeus, Xerxes' navy was crushed by the Athenians at the Battle of Salamis. In neither battle did Xerxes himself take the field, but history records the names of very few of his commanders. One who stands out, having warned the emperor against a battle at sea with Athens and being one of the few to exit the conflict with any praise, is Queen Artemisia I of Caria.

Artemisia was queen of the city state of Halicarnassus and it's thanks largely to her compatriot Herodotus that we still remember her. His record of the Battle of Salamis and its surrounding history is one of our few sources on the life and impact of Artemisia. "Other ancient Greek and Roman historians wrote about her too, but Herodotus *gushed* about her," says Dr Katie Nelson, co-author of *A History of the World in 80 Lost Women*. "He clearly deeply admired her. Plus, the way he didn't feel the need to 'explain' her presence tells us a lot about Persian attitudes to women at the time. The absence of an explainer tells us that a female general wasn't so unusual that it required a long explanation of how she came to be in such a role."

The facts about her life prior to the battle are sparse, to say the least. We know that she ruled as regent for her son,

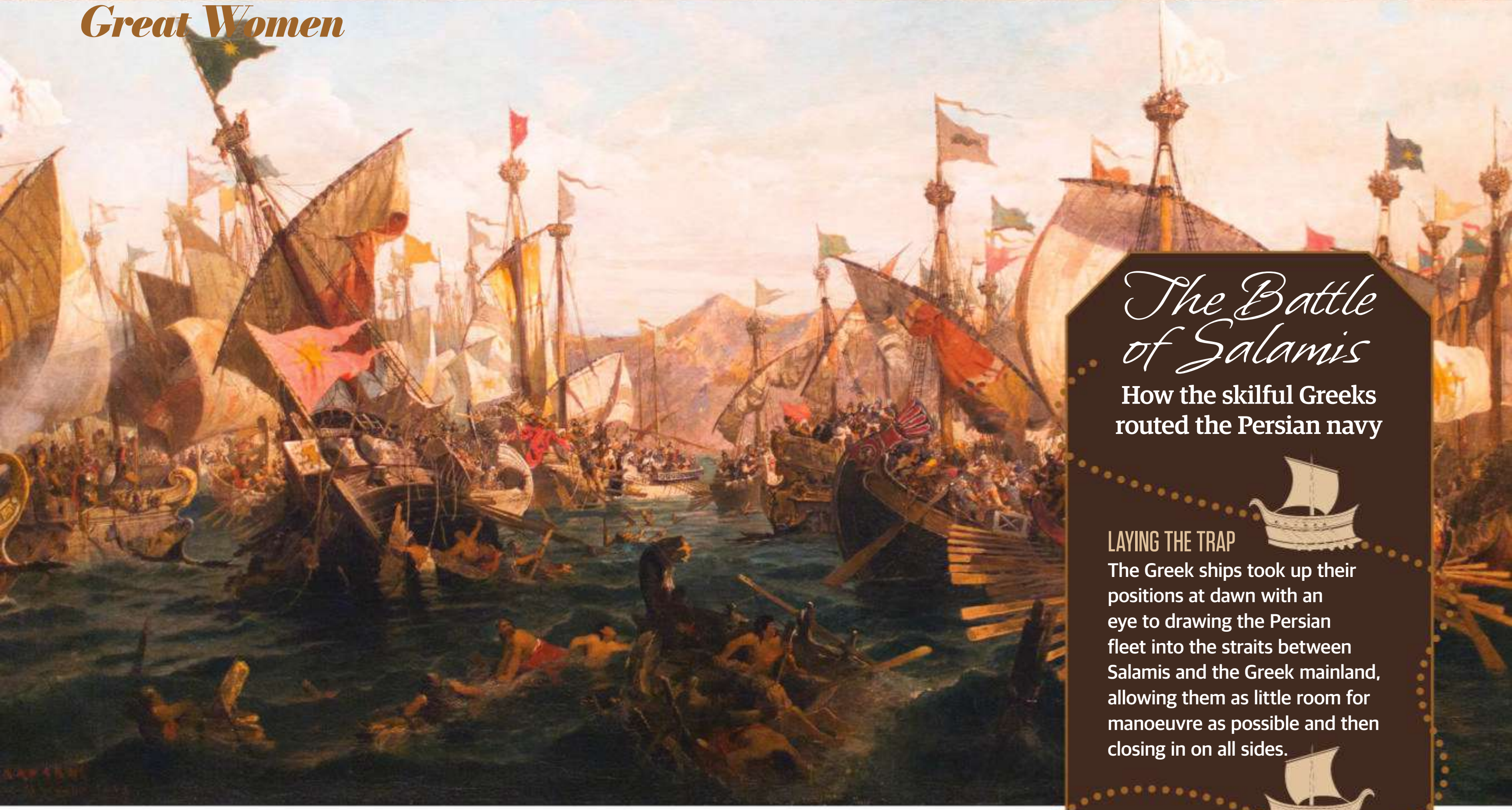
© Deniane Kartchner

EXPERT BIO

DR KATIE NELSON

Dr Katie Nelson is a World Historian teaching courses at Weber State University while also writing, leading tours and podcasting. Her show, *What's Her Name*, is co-hosted with Olivia Meikle, who is also co-author of their book *A History of the World in 80 Lost Women*.

All images: © Getty Images, © Shutterstock



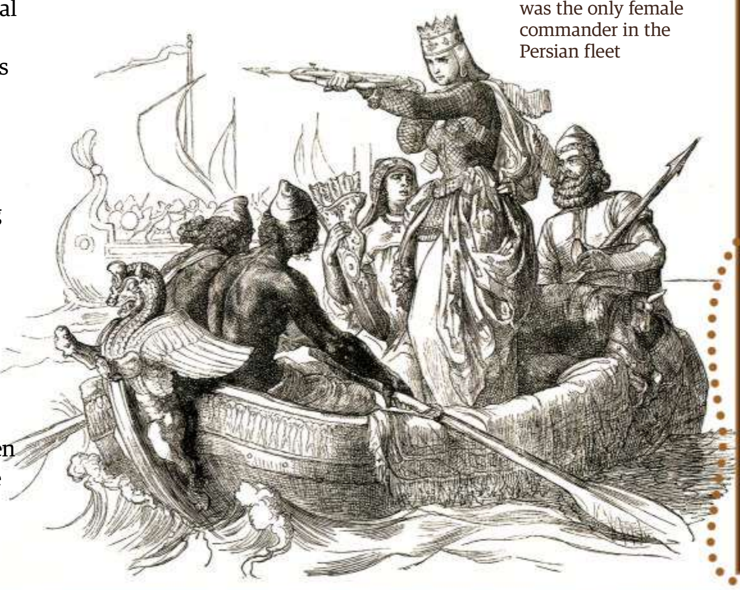
Pisindelis, following the death of her husband, whose name has been lost. We also know that she was the daughter of King Lygdamis of Halicarnassus and that her unnamed mother was originally from Crete, so she was of Greek and Carian descent. The precise start and end dates of her rule are less clear, but it coincided with the reign of Xerxes I (486-65 BCE). We also know that her city was one of the great powerhouses of the era.

"By the time she ruled, Halicarnassus had been a major trade port for many centuries," says Nelson. "It had been founded by the Mycenaeans, so her people would be well-versed in their own cultural legacy, the epic stories from the Age of Heroes. Soon after her rule, Halicarnassus built one of the famed Ancient Wonders of the World [the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, 351 BCE], so it was a big deal. Now it's a major tourist destination, Bodrum, Turkey, and people are flocking there from across Europe again."

Beyond that, however, much about Artemisia is unclear prior to her role in Xerxes' navy. As Nelson points out, Herodotus was clearly a fan, perhaps because having grown up in her city he heard stories of this warrior queen (Herodotus was about four years old when the battle took place). That said, he made a special point of dismissing Xerxes' other commanders in his account of the battle. "I name none of the rest of the captains, having no need so to do, save only Artemisia, who moves me to marvel greatly that a woman should have gone with the armament against Hellas," he wrote in his *Histories*. He reveals that she provided five ships to Xerxes' fleet, and they were considered among the best that took on Athens that day.

Nelson points out that Artemisia's contribution and equal place at the table among Persia's captains tells us a lot about the differences between Greek and Achaemenid culture. "She was one of his top generals, and the only female general. Based on the sources we have, it

ABOVE An 1882 painting of the Battle of Salamis by Constantinos Volanakis



BELOW Artemisia was the only female commander in the Persian fleet

All images: © Alamy, © Getty Images, © Shutterstock

The Battle of Salamis

How the skilful Greeks routed the Persian navy

LAYING THE TRAP

The Greek ships took up their positions at dawn with an eye to drawing the Persian fleet into the straits between Salamis and the Greek mainland, allowing them as little room for manoeuvre as possible and then closing in on all sides.

DRAWING THEM IN

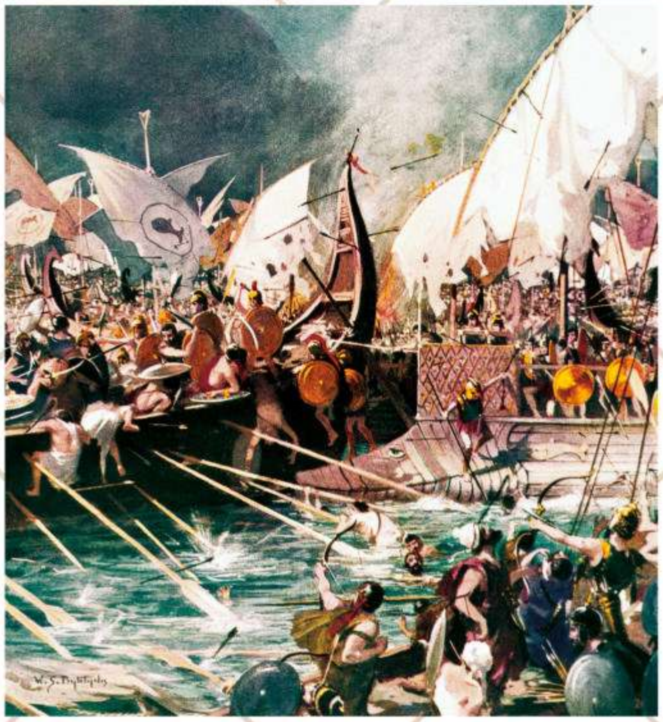
As the Persian ships approached the Greeks, the latter began to move backwards, drawing Xerxes' forces even deeper into the straits. This was exactly the kind of seamanship and knowledge that Artemisia must have feared.

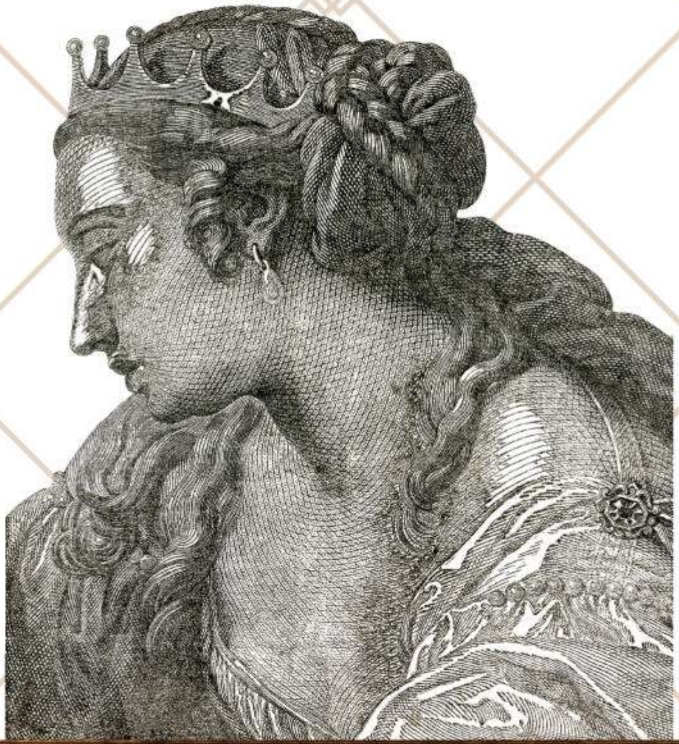
CLOSE-QUARTERS COMBAT

Once in position, the Greek ships began ramming from all sides, closing in on the Persians and turning the battle into a melee of javelins, arrows and marines leaping onto Achaemenid vessels to fight hand-to-hand.

NO ROOM TO RUN

In the crush of ships much of the Persian fleet is unable to turn effectively to make a retreat to gain any kind of advantage. Chaos ensues and ships continue to collide and become entangled with one another. Only those who can swim stand much of a chance of getting away.





TOP A Greek frieze depicting women in combat with men

ABOVE The Battle of Salamis became a crush of ships

BELOW Artemisia's reign after Salamis is lost to history

does seem like she not only had a seat at the table, but that she was as respected as the men. By all accounts, there was no 'mansplaining' or disregard because she was a woman. In other words, it wasn't a shock or scandal to have a female general. Women in ancient Persia were the most liberated in the ancient world. They were educated and entitled to own property and run businesses. And though it was still a patriarchal society, women could rise to positions of immense power."

Her presence certainly got the attention of the Greeks. The Athenians are thought to have offered 1,000 drachmas (equivalent to three years' wages for a workman) for her capture, and we know she was still remembered in 411 BCE because she is referenced in the play *Lysistrata*. "One legend says that ancient Sparta (another society of powerful women) erected a statue of her in their agora, built from the wreckage that the invading Persians left behind," says Nelson. "It's a wonderfully powerful myth: the losers used the wreckage of their own city to build a statue of their enemy's iconic female general. You could analyse that all day!"

> "The losers used the wreckage of their own city to build a statue of their enemy's iconic female general"

However, as mentioned earlier, Artemisia was not in favour of engaging the Athenians at sea. Herodotus records her objection, passed through another of Xerxes' trusted commanders named Mardonius: "Spare your ships, and offer no battle at sea; for their men are as much stronger by sea than yours, as men are stronger than women."

"Her words recorded by Herodotus are so rich," reflects Nelson. "What a line! From a female general, as she disagreed with all the men." It's important to also note in this objection and her subsequent command in the battle that Artemisia appears to have been free to take part or not in what was to come. There's no indication from Herodotus that Artemisia was strong-armed into engaging Athens. "Xerxes respected her all the more for daring to speak her mind when all others disagreed," says Nelson. "But he didn't take her advice. He launched the invasion, but gave her an out. She didn't have to go, but she chose to. She willingly sailed into a storm only she saw coming."

While Artemisia was the only woman recorded to have taken part in the Battle of Salamis, Nelson tells us that she was unlikely to have been an outlier, at least in Persian society. "I'd say [Artemisia's command] was about as unusual as it is today to see a female military commander. It was remarkable enough that Herodotus pays her special attention (and almost drips with admiration), but it wasn't so unusual that the Persians were shocked. So again, perhaps like seeing a female CEO or prime minister today – remarkable, a bit exciting and therefore watched more closely, but not shocking.

"But that's in Persia. In Athens it would've been unthinkable. Athenians would have been well and truly shocked to see a woman in command of anything, let alone a fleet of ships. Athens, though conceptually democratic, was incredibly oppressive to women. Athenian women weren't even welcome to walk around in public, let alone be citizens or take any form of command."

The Battle of Salamis went about as badly for Xerxes' forces as Artemisia predicted. Drawn into a tight strait, the Persian navy was surrounded on all sides. The crush of vessels meant the battle turned into close-quarters combat, and Artemisia's ship was seemingly trapped right in the middle of this melee. "The Persian fleet had been lured into a narrow passage and trapped by the quicker, more agile Athenian ships," explains Nelson. "As the waves churned, the Persian ships smashed into each other and sank before Xerxes' eyes."

It was at this point that Artemisia did something that's been portrayed as either daring or treacherous, depending on the observer's perspective. Pursued by an Athenian trireme but blocked by ships from the Persian fleet, she decided to ram through what was in front of her. The ship she crashed through was that of King Damasithymus of Calyndus. "It may be that she'd had some quarrel with him while they were still at the Hellespont, but if her deed was done of set purpose, or if the Calyndian met her by crossing her path at haphazard, I cannot say," wrote Herodotus, pondering whether the ramming had been entirely accidental or not. Regardless, it had two significant reactions from both friend and foe that worked in her favour. The Athenians thought she had switched allegiances and cut off their pursuit, while Xerxes, watching from a distance, thought she had smashed an enemy vessel and celebrated her brave commitment to

"Xerxes summoned all his generals to him, then in a symbolic gesture, dismissed all of them except Artemisia"

him. According to Herodotus, the king exclaimed: "My men have become women, and my women men."

The Battle of Salamis was lost but Artemisia's reputation and standing with Xerxes remained intact. "In the face of catastrophic loss and humiliation, Xerxes summoned all his generals to him, then in a symbolic gesture, dismissed all of them except Artemisia," says Nelson. "He asked what he should do, and Artemisia told him to 'GTFO'! He agreed, and tasked her with returning his children safely back to Persia (there were a lot of them). She took them on her ship and safely delivered them to Ephesus (in modern-day Turkey). After that, she disappears entirely from the historical record." Mardonius was left behind to continue Xerxes' invasion of Greece, also at Artemisia's suggestion, and he was killed at the Battle of Plataea the following year, bringing the campaign to an end.

It's believed that as reward for her bravery in the battle Artemisia received a full suit of Greek armour from Xerxes, which was a Greek custom to honour commanders rather than a Persian one, but could plausibly have been a Carian custom too and therefore doubly significant. Meanwhile, his admiral of the fleet was given a spindle and distaff, thought to be symbols of womanhood.

As Nelson says, firm details of what happened next for Artemisia are limited. One story from the 9th century suggests that, having been rejected by a prince named Dardanus, she threw herself into the sea, but no such legend seems to appear in any earlier texts. We know that her son Pisindelis took up his role as ruler of Caria around 460 BCE, so it's possible that Artemisia was occupied with her role as a local leader for much of that time following Salamis.

For her part, Nelson wishes Artemisia's story had received more attention: "It says so many interesting things about societies of the past. For one, her story highlights the fact that the 'role of women' in history can't be painted with a single brush. For ancient women, there was the patriarchy of ancient Persia and there was the patriarchy of Ancient Athens at the same time. Then as now, there's a whole spectrum of female experience in patriarchal societies." ○

ABOVE LEFT A statue of Artemisia in Bodrum, Turkey

ABOVE RIGHT The site where Halicarnassus once stood, now Bodrum

LEFT Eva Green in a rare portrayal of Artemisia in *300: Rise of an Empire*

A HISTORY OF THE WORLD IN 80 LOST WOMEN

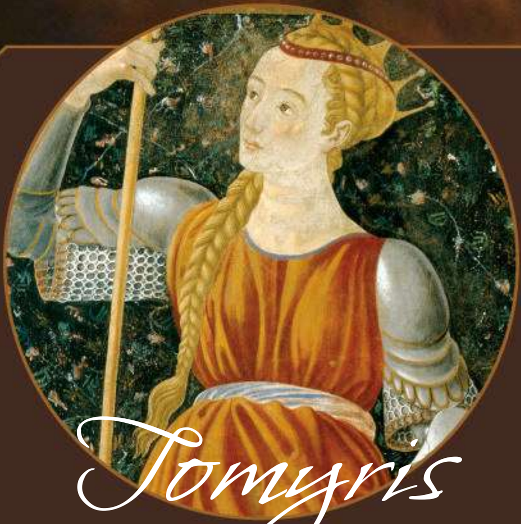
by Katie Nelson and Olivia Meikle is available now (£10.99, Michael O'Mara Books)

'A witty and engaging book that is also deeply inspiring.' Woman's Own
HISTORY
E WORLD IN
0 LOST
WOMEN
Katie Nelson & Olivia Meikle

All images: © Alamy, © Getty Images, © Shutterstock

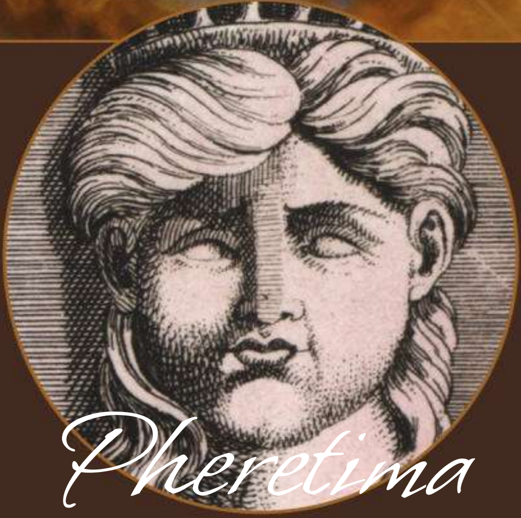
Greek Warrior Women

More female figures thought to have seen battle



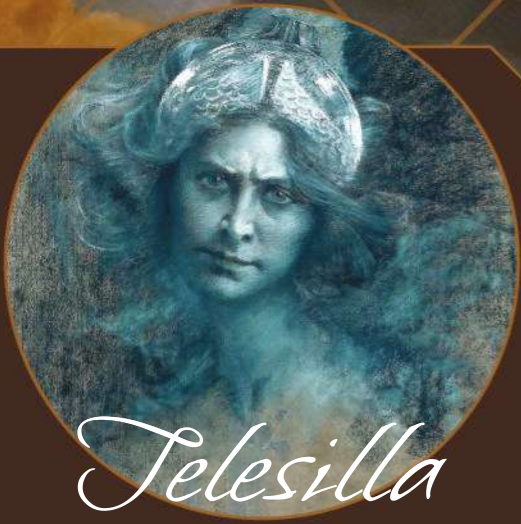
Tomyris

Believed to be the queen of Massagetae, Tomyris rejected a marriage proposal from Cyrus II then faced him in battle to defend her realm from his overtures. Herodotus writes that Tomyris led her troops in battle, and some accounts say Cyrus died in the fighting.



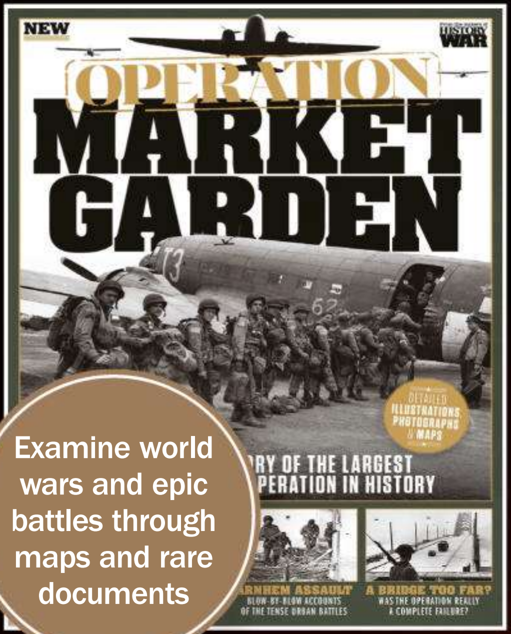
Pheretima

Queen of the Battiad Dynasty, Pheretima took the throne following the defeat and exile of her son around 518 BCE. He was later killed and she laid siege to Barca, where his killers were thought to be hiding. According to Herodotus, the siege lasted for nine months.

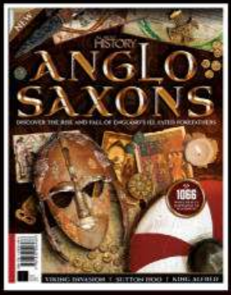


Telesilla

Unlike the other ruling women here, Telesilla was a poet of Argos, but when her city was under attack from the Spartans she is said to have organised the women, elderly and children of Argos to force back the enemy after they defeated the men in the field.

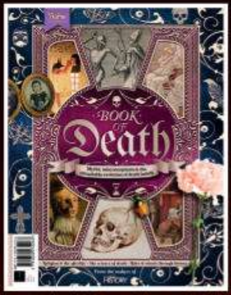

NEW
OPERATION
MARKET GARDEN
DETAILED ILLUSTRATIONS, PHOTOGRAPHS & MAPS
ARNHEM ASSAULT
A BRIDGE TOO FAR?

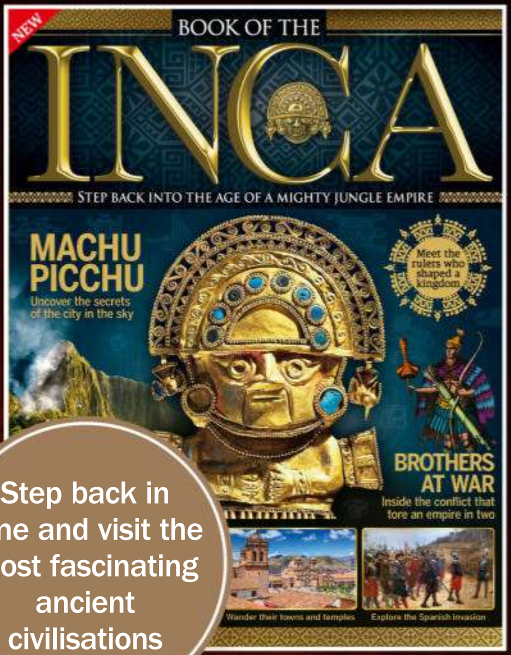
Examine world wars and epic battles through maps and rare documents


ANGLO-SAXONS

GREATEST QUEENS

NEW
STALIN
HITLER vs STALIN

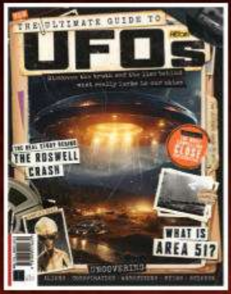

BOOK OF Death


NEW
BOOK OF THE
INCA
STEP BACK INTO THE AGE OF A MIGHTY JUNGLE EMPIRE
MACHU PICCHU
Uncover the secrets of the city in the sky
Meet the rulers who shaped a kingdom
BROTHERS AT WAR
Inside the conflict that tore an empire in two
Wander their towns and temples
Explore the Spanish invasion

Step back in time and visit the most fascinating ancient civilisations

History's Greatest Mysteries

NEW
MEDIEVAL MEDICINE

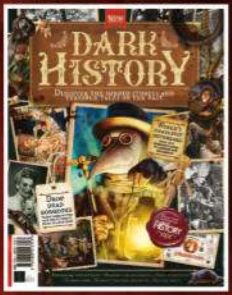

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO
UFOs
THE ROSWELL CRASH
WHAT IS AREA 51?

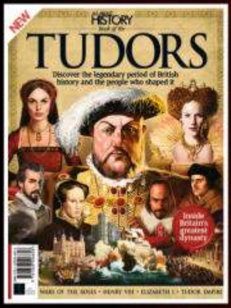
THE HISTORY OF
GANGS
ONCE YOU'RE IN, YOU'RE IN FOR LIFE

NEW
INSIDE THE WAY OF THE WARRIOR
BOOK OF THE
SAMURAI
THE INCREDIBLE STORY OF THE ICONIC JAPANESE FIGHTERS
RŌNIN: WANDERING SWORDSMEN

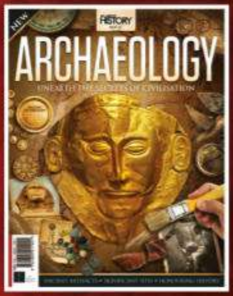
Explore iconic fighters, cultural traditions, top tactics and weapons

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT
THE MIDDLE AGES
DARK AGES?
HORDES & HOARDS
AGE OF CHIVALRY


DARK HISTORY


NEW
HISTORY
TUDORS

ROYAL DYNASTIES

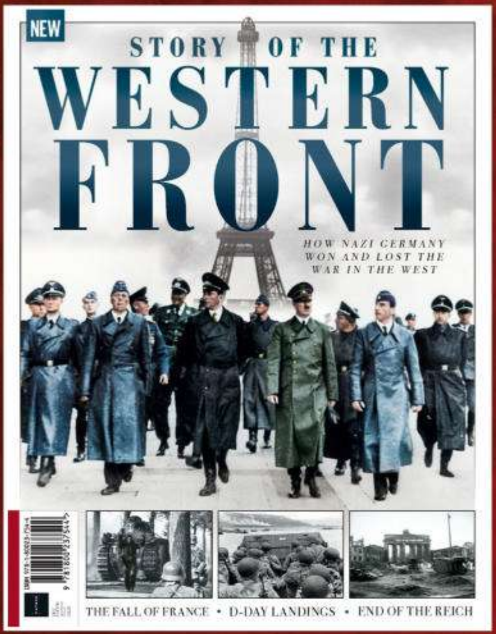

NEW
ARCHAEOLOGY

✓ Get great savings when you buy direct from us

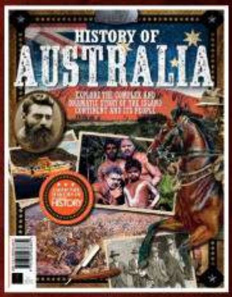
✓ 1000s of great titles, many not available anywhere else

✓ World-wide delivery and super-safe ordering

HISTORY OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES


NEW
STORY OF THE WESTERN FRONT
HOW NAZI GERMANY WON AND LOST THE WAR IN THE WEST
THE FALL OF FRANCE • D-DAY LANDINGS • END OF THE REICH

HISTORY OF Folklore, Fairytales & Monsters


HISTORY OF AUSTRALIA

THE DARK HISTORY of the VICTORIANS

NEW
HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE

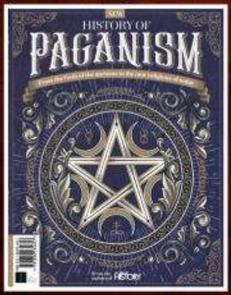
NEW
HISTORY OF AFRICA

STEP BACK IN TIME WITH OUR HISTORY TITLES

Immerse yourself in a world of emperors, pioneers, conquerors and legends and discover the events that shaped humankind

NEW
HISTORY of GHOSTS

NEW
HEROES OF WORLD WAR II

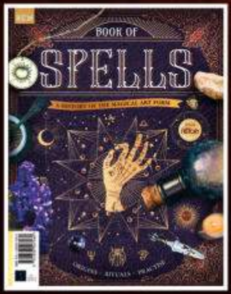

NEW
HISTORY OF PAGANISM

NEW
What if...
Book of Alternative
American History

Discover the answers to history's burning 'what if' questions

NEW
HISTORY OF JAPAN

NEW
THE ROARING TWENTIES
EXPLORE THE GILDED AGE OF ART DECO, DANCE AND DECADENCE


NEW
BOOK OF SPELLS

Instagram
futurebookazines

Follow us on Instagram @futurebookazines

FUTURE

www.magazinesdirect.com/history

Magazines, back issues & bookazines.

ALL ABOUT HISTORY ANNUAL

Future PLC Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA

Bookazine Editorial
Editor **Jonathan Gordon**
Art Editor **Kym Winters**
Head of Art & Design **Greg Whitaker**
Editorial Director **Jon White**
Managing Director **Grainne McKenna**

Magazine Editorial
Editor **Jonathan Gordon**
Art Editors **Kym Winters & Thomas Parrett**
Editor-in-Chief **Tim Williamson**
Senior Art Editor **Duncan Crook**

Cover images
Joe Cummings, Kevin McGivern, Alamy, Getty Images

Photography
All copyrights and trademarks are recognised and respected

Advertising
Media packs are available on request
Commercial Director **Clare Dove**

International
Head of Print Licensing **Rachel Shaw**
licensing@futurenet.com
www.futurecontenthub.com

Circulation
Head of Newstrade **Tim Mathers**

Production
Head of Production **Mark Constance**
Production Project Manager **Matthew Eglinton**
Advertising Production Manager **Joanne Crosby**
Digital Editions Controller **Jason Hudson**
Production Managers **Keely Miller, Nola Cokely,**
Vivienne Calvert, Fran Twentyman

Printed in the UK

Distributed by Marketforce – www.marketforce.co.uk
For enquiries, please email: mfcommunications@futurenet.com

All About History Annual Volume 12 (AHB6895)
© 2025 Future Publishing Limited

We are committed to only using magazine paper which is derived from responsibly managed, certified forestry and chlorine-free manufacture. The paper in this bookazine was sourced and produced from sustainable managed forests, conforming to strict environmental and socioeconomic standards.

All contents © 2025 Future Publishing Limited or published under licence. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be used, stored, transmitted or reproduced in any way without the prior written permission of the publisher. Future Publishing Limited (company number 2008885) is registered in England and Wales. Registered office: Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1 1UA. All information contained in this publication is for information only and is, as far as we are aware, correct at the time of going to press. Future cannot accept any responsibility for errors or inaccuracies in such information. You are advised to contact manufacturers and retailers directly with regard to the price of products/services referred to in this publication. Apps and websites mentioned in this publication are not under our control. We are not responsible for their contents or any other changes or updates to them. This magazine is fully independent and not affiliated in any way with the companies mentioned herein.

FUTURE

Connectors.
Creators.
Experience
Makers.

Future plc is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (symbol: FUTR)
www.futureplc.com

Chief Executive Officer **Kevin Li Ying**
Non-Executive Chairman **Richard Huntingford**
Chief Financial Officer **Sharjeel Suleman**

Tel +44 (0)1225 442 244

Part of the
ALL ABOUT HISTORY
bookazine series

Widely Recycled

ipso. Regulated

ALL ABOUT HISTORY ANNUAL

The events, people & discoveries that changed the world

Making A Monster

Natalie Lawrence explores the creation of embodied creatures through 35,000 years of history

MAKING A MONSTER

What mythical beasts from ancient tales tell us about those cultures and communities

Royal History

British Royal Bastards

Discover the politics, prevalence and provenance of Britain's royal illegitimate children from the Norman Conquest to today

BRITISH ROYAL BASTARDS

The trials and tribulations of being the illegitimate child of a monarch

Crime & Punishment

Stars Behind Bars

STARS BEHIND BARS

The stories behind some of history's most famous mugshots

Art History

Origins of Kabuki

Explore the tumultuous history of one of Japan's most famous art forms

ORIGINS OF KABUKI

Discover the controversial history of Japan's famous theatrical art

Artemisia

Pirate Princess of Halicarnassus

Praised by Herodotus, what do we really know about the women who stood with Xerxes against the Greeks?

ARTEMISIA: PIRATE QUEEN

What do we really know about the woman who fought for Xerxes against the Greeks?

BIRMINGHAM
CHILDREN

BOOKAZINE

9001